

Harmony Hammond
Elegies

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“The notes I handle no better than many pianists. But the pauses between the notes - ah, that is where the art resides.” Artur Schnabel

The pauses between the notes in music parallel the boundaries between entities in a painting. This in-between realm is an elusive territory - that razor-thin edge between chaos and order that is the source of all art. Harmony Hammond's new work is about negotiating this edge to distill the essence of material and meaning.

Six monotypes and four paintings are presented in this exhibition. In each monotype two square fields are stacked vertically. Every print has been pulled from the same two plates, so the residue from print to print is deeply felt. Multiple layers of ink are compressed, forming a buried archeology of process, revealing “sediments” that allude to raku glazes and rusted metals. The horizontal edge between the two fields is a ridge of paint, which energizes the flat surface, creating separate yet parallel universes of darkness and exploding light. Although red-orange flares seem like aerial projectiles, thread-thin vertical drips pull the images downward with a strong gravitational force, coagulating along the ridge. Does this irregular line suggest how we draw boundaries between territories, cultures, beliefs, and the dark sides of our hearts?

Two large squares are set side by side in each painting. The oils are layered like the inks in the monotypes, yet Hammond creates a compelling contrast between the two mediums. There is freedom in the build up of oils and containment in the flattening of inks. The artist's multiple layering of paint forms a thick skin that is at once tactile and visceral. In several of the works she has incised horizontal lines across the surfaces, violating the skin, puncturing the body. Complex directionality of brush strokes leaves deposits of paint here and there. These lumps and bumps are enhanced by changing illumination in the gallery throughout the day. The forms appear to breathe and pulse with life when the light sculpts them. A topology of “hills,” “valleys,” “plains,” and “pools” portrays a rich emotional terrain.

In *Elegy #4*, the panel on the left is a lush phthalo blue/green. Hammond's brushstrokes bring forth an iridescent dappling of light, evoking a visual and visceral response in the viewer similar to that of Monet's *Water Lilies*. Although her paintings present an internal dance, they also possess an architectural presence. The artist's concern with navigating edges and surfaces generates an investigation of the fragile realm where one thing meets another. The Cuban architect Mario Romanach once expressed that in architecture $1 + 1$ is not 2; it becomes 3 because one must understand and integrate the space in between. As Hammond explores texture along the borders of the paintings and across the edges between the squares, she permits an expansion of surface that stretches each canvas into the surrounding space, turning the gallery into the frame.