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Ten Years and Counting: Jessica Silverman Gallery

Written by Katy Diamond Hamer

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SAN FRANCISCO, CA – July 19 – Group Photo attends Kinship: Celebrating 10 Years of Jessica Silverman Gallery on July 19th 2018 at Jessica Silverman Gallery in San Francisco, CA (Photo – Drew Altizer Photography)

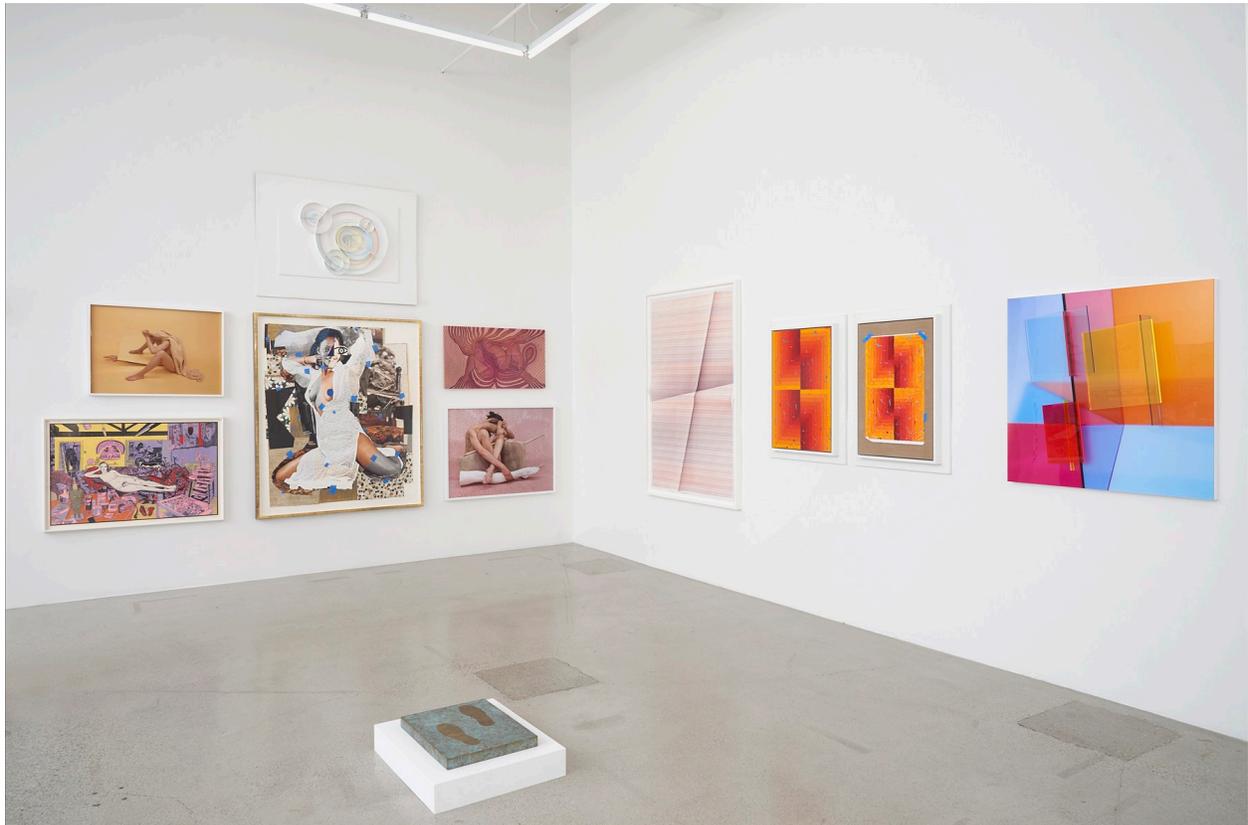
Katy Diamond Hamer: You founded the Jessica Silverman Gallery ten years ago. Can you talk about your first exhibition and what that was like? Did you ever imagine having the gallery this long?

Jessica Silverman: While it may seem hard to fathom, I did envision the gallery growing and being open beyond the first few years. When I began organizing exhibitions, I hadn't yet formalized the gallery and used a basement space in the Dogpatch neighborhood, as a kind of project space. In 2008, I relocated to a storefront on Sutter Street in Downtown San Francisco. It was a small but active space, which by 2012, resulted in me having bigger art fair booths than the gallery itself! The first show we had at Sutter Street was with Bay Area artist Tammy Rae Carland, whom we continue to represent today. This exhibition explored kinship as a leitmotif and was actually the inspiration behind the current anniversary show, on view at 488 Ellis, the space we've been in since 2013.

KDH: So many galleries come and go. It's a tough business and not only does the gallery need to be resilient but also active in the art world, visible and attention grabbing. You've been participating in art fairs for

years including the Armory Show in New York and FIAC in Paris, and Art Basel in Miami, amongst others. What has that experience been like for you?

JS: When I first opened a gallery in San Francisco, people thought I was crazy. I was told at least once a week that I should consider moving to Los Angeles. I trusted my instincts and stuck it out. In those earlier moments, art fairs outside of the city were not only important to gaining visibility but also to surviving. The fairs we do have changed over the years and most recently the gallery became a member of the Art Dealers Association of America (ADAA). Art fairs continue to be an important part of our schedule but with experience we have become savvier about which ones we do and how we do them!



Kinship: Celebrating 10 Years of Jessica Silverman Gallery in San Francisco, CA, Image Courtesy of the gallery, 2018

KDH: Tell us about Fused, the alternative venue to your gallery headquarters.

JS: Fused came about in 2013 when I was looking to move the gallery to a new location. My friend, Swiss Industrial designer Yves Behar, had just bought a building and was moving his company into it. He decided to keep a 2,000 square foot space in the front open and suggested I curate shows there. I was keen on a larger space so I took it on. We have done a mixture of group shows and solo shows. It's been an incredible platform for doing ambitious projects with artists. Most recently, our show with John Houck resulted in his joining the gallery roster. The space is located in Potrero Hill and we have hosted close to 20 shows in the past 5 years.

KDH: I love that you have certain items available for purchase through the website. As someone who has acquired some small artworks in my life but can't always do that, I like when lower priced objects are made available. Can you talk about the selection of items and how that came about?

JS: My grandparents collected Fluxus when I was growing up and I think this has played into my love of ephemera. I have always loved the fact that Paula Cooper also owns 192 books. Our online store is a small and growing effort to, as you suggest, provide an entry point and also context to the artists we represent through books and editions. I love the Judy Chicago dinner and dessert plates we just got in. Margo Wolowiec's blanket is nearly sold out. Keep an eye out for our new tote bag in honor of our 10-year anniversary show.



SAN FRANCISCO, CA – July 19 – Jessica Silverman attends Kinship: Celebrating 10 Years of Jessica Silverman Gallery on July 19th 2018 at Jessica Silverman Gallery in San Francisco, CA (Photo – Drew Altizer Photography)

KDH: The artist list of your stable is quite impressive. Not only is it female heavy, but you have young artists like Hayal Pozanti and Hugh Scott-Douglas but also Isaac Julien and Judy Chicago. Can you talk about what it has been like to work with artists over the years and how you've grown your roster?

JS: Some of the earliest shows included local artists who we continue to represent: Luke Butler, Tammy Rae Carland and Matt Lipps (who has since moved to LA). Then we began to give national artists their first solo gallery shows. This included Hugh Scott Douglas, Hayal Pozanti and Dashiell Manley. In 2013, when we moved to our current 3000-square-foot location at 488 Ellis we began broadening our artist base to established artists, such as Amikam Toren, Isaac Julien and Judy Chicago, while continuing our commitment to emerging artists like Margo Wolowiec, Matthew Angelo Harrison and Woody De Othello. Our recent artist additions are Davina Semo and John Houck. I am constantly looking and love finding new artists to show in the Bay Area.

KDH: What has the gallery reception been like in San Francisco over the years? Has it always felt comfortable and accepting?

JS: It has always felt accepting. I could tell immediately that there was a need for the gallery I wanted to start. But, it took time to gain people's trust, build credibility and for a collector base to emerge. Over the past few years, many articles have come out about Silicon Valley and whether people there are collecting. This has been a slow but rewarding process and our presence in SF is now much more known, respected and supported.



Kinship: Celebrating 10 Years of Jessica Silverman Gallery in San Francisco, CA, Image Courtesy of the gallery, 2018

KDH: Do you have a plan for the next ten years...or are you taking it a day or year at a time?

JS: When you celebrate your 10-year anniversary, it is hard not to think about what is next. I never shy away from ambition but also want to be smart about our growth and take our time to get there. In terms of the most recent future, I am very excited to give Bay Area artist Woody De Othello his first gallery solo show in September!

Jessica Silverman's Top 5 inspirations:

1. My grandparents Fluxus collection
2. My summer in Germany in 2006
3. The Detroit Institute of Arts
4. Printed Matter bookstore
5. Judy Chicago

Kinship features artists: Yoko Ono, Barbara Kasten, Judy Chicago, Mary Heilmann, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Amikam Toren, Suzanne Blank Redstone, John Waters, Ian Wallace, Donald Woodman, Catherine Wagner, Grayson Perry, Isaac Julien, Tammy Rae Carland, Andrea Bowers, Susanne M. Winterling, Mickalene Thomas, Haegue Yang, Luke Butler, Nicole Wermers, Julian Hoeber, Hank Willis Thomas, Matt Lipps, John Houck, Christopher Badger, N Dash, Davina Semo, Sean Raspet, Heather Rasmussen, Hayal Pozanti, Ru O'Connell, Dashiell Manley, Margo Wolowiec, Hugh Scott Douglas, Matthew Angelo Harrison, Woody De Othello and is on view until August 31st, 2018.