

whitewall

"Jessica Silverman Grows Gallery Community of Artists and Collectors in San Francisco"

By Katy Donoghue

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Jessica Silverman portrait by Stan Olszewski / SOSKI Photo, courtesy of Jessica Silverman.

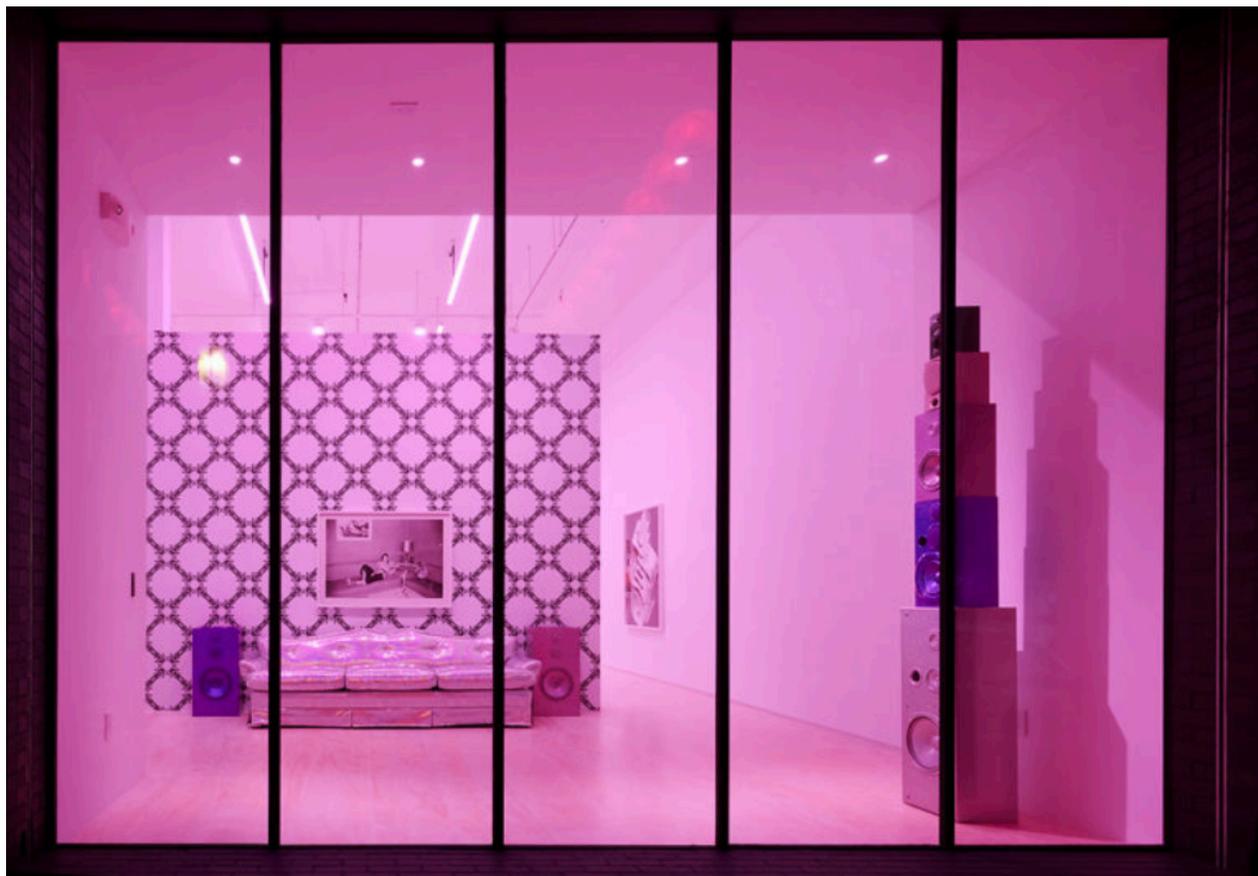
Last spring, [Jessica Silverman](#) opened the new home of her [eponymous gallery](#) in the Chinatown neighborhood of San Francisco, working with [Abigail Turin](#), cofounder of [Kallos Turin](#), on the design. There are noticeable moments of character—from the facade to the door handles, and from the flooring to the bathroom tile choices.

This winter, [Sadie Barnette](#)'s "Inheritance" will be on view through early January, with shows from [Julian Hoeber](#) and [Chelsea Ryoko Wong](#) slated for early 2022. As one of the best, if not the best, gallerists in San Francisco, Silverman's mission is to support the careers of artists at any age, maintain long-term relationships with collectors, and to represent the best of the Bay Area while doing it. Names like [Clare Rojas](#), [Woody De Othello](#), [Rashaad Newsome](#), and Barnette have recently joined the gallery's roster in pursuit of that endeavor.

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Whitewall spoke with Silverman in the fall just after she returned from **Art Basel**, where she presented a solo booth of work by the artist **Rose B. Simpson**.



Installation view, Sadie Barnette's "Inheritance," 2021, courtesy of the artist and Jessica Silverman, San Francisco.

WHITEWALL: This winter, you're showing new work by Sadie Barnette. Can you tell us about what will be on view?

JESSICA SILVERMAN: A lot of Sadie's work examines her family's legacy. This word, "inheritance" is often associated with money, but it's also very much within her family about information and family history. She's been using archival material from her father's 500-page declassified FBI dossier. He was part of the Black Panther party—he never went to jail, but he was tracked, made miserable, and eventually lost his job because of it.

She's been doing these beautiful drawings with graphite, a direct translation of the FBI files. She stamps them with feminized personal visuals, and she's also adding color to them now. By making these drawings, it gives her time to meditate on the bravery and politics and real people who were harmed by these FBI documents.

WW: And we saw that Rashaad Newsome just joined the gallery! When does it make sense for you to begin representing an artist?

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JS: I often have this mantra that if I'm going to be a great dealer and also see myself or be seen as the best gallery in the Bay Area—I'm not saying we are, but if that's our goal to be perceived as such—then I feel like we have to represent the best of the Bay Area. So when I heard Rashaad was living here we met up and started chatting. It was like, we have to work together, it wasn't even a question.

There was a time our program ebbed and flowed with local artists, and we've recently started to rebuild that with Woody De Othello, Clare Rojas, Sadie Barnette, Rashaad Newsome.



Jessica Silverman Gallery, photo © Henrik Kam, 2021.

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WW: This past spring you moved to and opened a new space in Chinatown. What is the space like, how did you work with designer Abigail Turin on it, and what does this move mean for you?

JS: I was looking at the end of 2019 and found this space. In early 2020 we signed a lease, we broke ground on the renovation, and came into all sorts of delays with COVID and the planning part, as you can imagine. But in the end, it turned out to work in our favor because when we were finally ready to open in May, it was like the world was ready to come spend time with us.

Abby is a dear friend, and she brought some fair to the project, because when you think of the white cube, you don't think about having Gaudí door handles, but it was really important to do that and keep the original railings in the space and powder-coat them black. And then we decided to invite Claudia Wieser, who I represent, to do a tile installation in the bathroom. We tried to do little things that felt like it wasn't just a boring white cube. So even doing the plywood floors was a big gesture as well.

WW: You redesigned your logo as well, and looking at your website, I was struck by your "About" section, as it speaks to artists, rather than potential collectors, emphasizing supporting a career and getting artists' work into museums—and seeing the collector as collaborator. Why is it important for you to so succinctly make that distinction?

JS: I am really fortunate that my partner is Sarah Thornton, who is a journalist and sociologist. She and I spoke about it for a while, and it was like, if you're going to say something, you should say something. It should be something that is true to the brand of the gallery, so that was the impulse behind it. It reflects the goals we have, which are to support artists, influence contemporary culture, and increase our cultural authority. Those are the kind of mandates we strive for, and I think it's important to communicate that to the outside world.

I'm from the Midwest; I'm a real relationships person. Our collectors support the artists that they first bought in 2010, but then they continue to support the other artists that join our program and they loan works to museum shows. It really is a true collaboration, because as seven people here in San Francisco, we can't pretend we can do it alone, and we don't want to do it alone, so that collaboration is essential.

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Clare Rojas, "Rainbow Path," 2021, courtesy of the artist and Jessica Silverman.



Rose B. Simpson, "Sisterself 1," 2021, Slap-slab ceramic with terra sigillata, wood, leather, grout, 26 x 11 x 5 inches and "Sisterself A," 2021, Slap-slab ceramic with terra sigillata, wood, leather, grout, 26 1/2 x 11 x 5 inches; courtesy of the artist and Jessica Silverman Gallery.

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