

HOLLIS TAGGART

Hollis Taggart Presents New Work by Three Contemporary Artists Who Experiment with Language and Abstraction

codes and colors

On View November 21 – December 28, 2024

November 3, 2024 – Hollis Taggart is pleased to present *codes and colors*, a three-person show of contemporary abstract artists who incorporate text-based media and language into their work. Featuring new work by Alessandro Painsi, Despina Stokou, and Milan Young, the exhibition brings together an international group of artists who embrace the expressive freedom of abstraction to challenge the supposedly fixed meanings of words and structure of language. Curated by Severin Delfs, an Associate at Hollis Taggart, the exhibition celebrates contemporary artists who use abstraction to toy with semantic meaning and demonstrate how language can be broken down or imbued with new meaning through imagery. *codes and colors* will be on view on the second floor of Hollis Taggart from November 21 through December 28, 2024, with an opening reception on Friday, November 22, from 5-8PM.

As labels, words, and phrases take on charged meanings, abstraction offers a space to disrupt these associations, encouraging us to break away from fixed narratives and explore deeper, more nuanced interpretation. While the three artists featured in *codes and colors* have very different backgrounds – Alessandro Painsi is an Austrian-born artist based in Denmark; Despina Stokou is Greek-born based in Los Angeles; and Milan Young is an American artist born in Washington, DC and based in Maryland – they all share a mutual interest in how words and narrative can be freed through abstraction. At times the text in their works is legible and at others it is merely suggested, hidden beneath layers of other text or abstract smears.

In a world increasingly divided by polarized language and ideas, these artists remind us of the power of nuance, pushing us to delve beyond the surface to the layered complexities beneath. In distinct and innovative ways, all three artists expand the possibilities of interpretation through careful stylistic choices that embrace the action and emotion of painting to challenge the associations and meanings of words.

Alessandro Painsi (b. 1995) experiments with oil painting and collage on canvases that he often cuts and stitches back together. Combining everyday materials like cotton, jute, and denim with simple words like “sad” and “new,” Painsi’s works pop with blotches of color that at times interrupt or highlight the text. The overlapping narratives of color and word create a kind of dance on Painsi’s canvases, reflecting his own background as a former professional dancer.

Despina Stokou (b. 1978) is known for transposing swaths of text-based data from the internet onto canvas and ceramic. Reflecting the cacophony and ceaseless chatter of the internet and being constantly connected, Stokou is interested in capturing this feeling through abstracting words rather than depicting specific messages or phrases. While her oversaturated canvases mimic the infinite depth and endless void of image and word on the internet, her paintings also seem joyous in their explosiveness, perhaps inviting the viewer to abandon meaning altogether.

Milan Young (b. 1997) employs a vast array of media from oil paint to sharpie and colored pencil to create gestural strokes that are at times highly controlled and at other times loose and intuitive. Within her works, Young inscribes messages and notes to herself, creating a diaristic imprint that

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is deeply personal though mostly concealed. Layering her canvases with patterns and repeated words, Young's canvases become a painterly hide-and-seek of meaning and language, replete with her knowledge of color theory and abstract expressionism.

About Hollis Taggart

Founded in 1979, Hollis Taggart presents significant works of American art, showcasing the trajectory of American art movements from the Hudson River School to American Modernism and the Post-War and Contemporary eras. Its program is characterized by a deep commitment to scholarship and bringing to the fore the work of under-recognized artists. The gallery has sponsored several catalogue raisonné projects, most recently for the American Surrealist artist Kay Sage, and has been instrumental in advancing knowledge of such artists as Alfred Maurer, Arthur B. Carles, and more recently, Theodoros Stamos, Marjorie Strider, and Michael (Corinne) West. In the summer of 2019, the gallery announced the formal expansion of its primary market business and focus on the presentation of contemporary work. It continues to expand its roster of contemporary artists, focusing on emerging and mid-career talents. With more than 40 years of experience, Hollis Taggart is widely recognized by collectors and curators for its leadership, expertise, and openness, on matters of art history, market trends and opportunities.

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