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INTERVIEWS

The Interlaced Layers of Tamara Gonzales

by Samuel Jablon on November 14, 2014

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Tamara Gonzales, "blue menina" (2014) spray paint on canvas, 60 x 52 inches/152.4 x 132.1 cm (all images courtesy Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery)

The Brooklyn-based painter Tamara Gonzales works with spray paint and lace to create digital, optical, urban, and electric paintings. Using pieces of lace as stencils to juxtapose decorative elements, Gonzalez forms a meditative space within the surface of the paintings. She is especially interested in Baroque churches, rose windows, altars, excess, gaudiness and veiling; these elements appear throughout her work. The lace, spray paint, and stencil are used in place of loaded brushstrokes, removing the gesture.

Gonzales is a thoroughly contemporary abstractionist, which is to say her work could be found in a Tumblr feed as easily as it is found on the white wall of a gallery. There is an immediacy that lends itself to the nature of the internet, and there is also a materiality and contemplativeness that lends itself to abstract painting. The paintings exist somewhere in the middle, caught between new and arcane technology. The work offers ambiguous moments with blurred patterns and no clear narrative; they become objects that need to be investigated, probed, and literally looked into.



Tamara Gonzales, 'Winter is Coming,' installation view (2014)

Samuel Jablon: *Tell me about the concept behind the work in your current solo exhibition at Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery?*

Tamara Gonzales: The concept for the show came after we selected the paintings. I do a lot of spraying during the summer so it was a process of editing this group from a larger body of work. Then after several days of looking at the group the idea of "Winter is Coming" presented itself. It felt right on several levels. The obvious, it's a fall show so winter is literally coming. The palette reminded me of the light you get with snow and winter, and of course Game of Thrones. I sent [this image I made at a meme generator](#) to Ingrid (thank you, Tumblr) and it all fell into place.

SJ: *Could you talk about your attraction to patterns?*

TG: With regards to my painting it's grown out of using the lace for stencils. Previously it was mostly dots. A few of my painter pals and I have this running line "You can never go wrong with dots." We attribute that saying to the painter Tom Nozkowski. As for my interests I've always had a love for Pyzanky eggs, stripes, leopard prints, and paisley. Pattern seems so inherent to doodling and yet doodles defy pattern.

SJ: *How do you start a painting? Does it start with a sketch, a fabric, a form?*

TG: It sometimes starts with a sketch. During the cold months when I'm not spray-painting so much I keep sketchbooks going...watercolor and colored pencils. I use these as references a lot. They are small so when I do blow one up to make a painting I just look at it and do either a quick pencil drawing on the canvas, mostly just trying out edges, or just start with the acrylic ground and go with any proportional errors that inevitably happen. They start flat on the floor so while the grounds are washy and can puddle I have some control over dripping.

SJ: *There seem to be a lot of clashing/juxtaposed patterns. How do you decide what pattern goes where?*



Tamara Gonzales, "red lunar skywalker" (2014)
spray paint on canvas, 66 x 54 inches/167.6 x 137.2
cm

TG: I spread the lace out on the floor so I can just look and grab. I often develop a fondness for a certain pattern and will reuse it over and over. When it begins to degrade I'll start trying to save it for a place where I have a pretty good idea of how it will work. Looking at the patterns on other paintings also helps me choose. Realistically though 30 minutes into a session when I have a full face mask on and a totally toxic room I'm going with first choice best choice.

SJ: *There are forms are defined by the patterns. How do these forms relate to the patterns, and what are the forms? Abstraction or something else?*

TG: Partial abstractions? Non perspective art? While I don't consider myself a

formalist in that my primary concerns are all about a certain color or line doing a certain thing with regards to the other things contained in the picture plane—all those activities are going on in the background when I am painting, and I have a good understanding of color so they are very important considerations. The patterns are like different brushes...a palette of their own. For instance with the lunar skywalkers there is a figure ground relationship and the right foot steps forward. A right footed Kouros emerging from a pattern with a sense that he or she or it can easily dissolve back into the pattern. There is a youthfulness conveyed. Hopefully a playfulness too. Within the context of Winter is Coming I like to think of the sound fresh snow crunching underfoot.

SJ: *There is one tall-skinny-cut out piece on wood that has a very different vibe then the rest of the exhibition. I like how it adds another element to the exhibition. What is different about this piece, and how do you see it functioning in the show?*

TG: The tall skinny piece is titled *Abuelita* which is granny in Spanish. That shape is from a found cardboard box and I use it as a stencil in a lot of paintings. It's come to have a life of it's own. I do make sculpture and installations and Klaus gallery has high ceilings I wanted to take advantage of...in this show she is a guardian totem.

SJ: *Your paintings seem almost digital to me. Do you see your work in relation to digital media?*

TG: Rob Hult, one of the directors at Klaus Gallery, commented that one of the things he liked about lunar skywalker was that it looked as if the painting was still loading. Like the moment on a screen when a jpeg is about to snap into focus and each pixel seems to be flickering into solidity. I worked for years making banners, buttons, and websites for Time Inc. so I'd constantly be trimming things pixel by pixel. I'm sure it had an influence. I've also watched lots of anime. Love animation and cartoons.

SJ: *What's next for you?*

TG: Next month I'll have some work with Klaus von Nichtssagend gallery at Nada and I'm very excited that my work will be used in Peter Lamborn Wilson's upcoming publication *Hoodo Metaphysics*. I have another trip to Peru planned and I always do a lot of drawing when I travel.