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Front

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Jennifer Mitchell
Artist Statement
2010

My feelings and thoughts are ruled by the way I see. An image can profoundly affect people. I am inspired by that power. My paintings are a mirror; they reflect every day life. My work invites the viewer to uncover the mask of appearance.

As a deaf woman, I live in a world of silence and painting is a silent art that gives me strength. Often, people want to know what it is like to be deaf and live in silence. For me, sound is something that I see or that I create in my mind, but this is difficult to explain. I think in pictures. Concepts and content in my world are constructed through color, dimension, movement and form. Sensations come to me through images, gestures, and touch. I put a greater importance on color, it permeates differently for me. I get an enhanced picture, in that color can be noisy; it communicates warmth energy and vibration. This rich visual language constructs my view of life.

However, my work does not give people a glimpse into the deaf world. Rather, it gives me a voice to express how I see the outside world. It is empowering to create: painting providing a vehicle for abstract thoughts, feelings and spirituality to be transported into a physical form. My paintings intertwine my internal and external self, projecting a female perspective. I am returning the gaze but there is an added or different motivation for me. I find looking back to be uniquely poignant. As a painter I have a freedom to tap into myself and as this ability increases, my anxiety is managed by a greater sense of independence, resulting in personal stability and security. The images I construct project an empowerment and freedom that is not always available in a soundless world. My paintings become an

ability to declare the noisy places inside of me and to share my silence with the hearing world.

I find painting an extraordinary medium to reflect alternate perspectives. The female perspective in my work is characteristically doubled, collapsing the subject/object relationship. I am both embracing my personal subjectivity, while attempting to control the viewer's gaze of me as an object. I gain the pleasure from viewing while simultaneously, confronting myself as the viewer. The audience is invited into my self-absorbed conversation.

I look at contemporary artists for different reasons. Jenny Saville returns the gaze and Jun Hasegawa is stylistically provocative with figures like cut outs in semi-real backgrounds. Eric Fischl's disturbing representations or John Currin's purposeful "bad boy" attempts are interesting but not for my intentions. Finally, Nicol Tyson abstracts both figure and ground providing a reference to push my work. I hope to learn from these artists but it is not my intention to emulate their practice or particular concerns. In conclusion, I only paint women. They are self-sufficient, communicative, meeting the gaze, but also allowing people into their hearts and/or minds. If they are read otherwise, they have been taken out of context and now occupy a fictional territory in which they are out of place, trapped in a world of silence and unable to make contact. My work speaks to this visual language, reflecting a search for answers to questions by those seeking personal growth.