

For Immediate Release

Blackness in Abstraction

510 West 25th Street, New York

June 24 – August 19, 2016

Opening reception:

Thursday, June 23, 6–8 pm



New York—Pace Gallery is pleased to present *Blackness in Abstraction*, an exhibition curated by Adrienne Edwards tracing the persistent presence of the color black in art, with a particular emphasis on monochromes, from the 1940s to today. *Blackness in Abstraction* is on view from June 24 to August 19, 2016 at 510 West 25th Street, with an opening reception on Thursday, June 23 from 6 to 8 p.m. A catalogue will be published to accompany the exhibition with a cover designed by artist Adam Pendleton and text written by Edwards.

Blackness in Abstraction considers the use of black as a method, mode and material in works by twenty-nine artists who have explored the expressive and symbolic possibilities of black as a color. Featuring works—over a third of which are newly created—by an international and intergenerational group of artists, the exhibition explores blackness as a highly evocative and animating

force in various approaches to abstract art. The exhibition looks at the role of the color black across a range of practices, spanning Geometric Abstraction, Minimalism and Conceptualism to its use in the present.

Included in the exhibition is the work of Louise Nevelson, who explained her commitment to black, saying “For me, the black contains the silhouette, the essence of the universe.” Also included will be works by Sol LeWitt, whose painted wood and wall structures of the early 1960s explore black through a conceptual framework, and Ad Reinhardt, who considered his black paintings “pure abstract, non-objective, timeless, spaceless, changeless, relationless, disinterested.” Revisiting manifestations of the black square and tracing its evolution over time to a more layered and frayed entity are a new suite of paintings by Ellen Gallagher riffing off of Kazimir Malevich’s *Black Square on a White Ground* (1915), mixed media works by Turiya Magadlela, a bound fabric wall sculpture by Laura Lima, and Jonathas de Andrade’s photographic iterations of the black square, which use plastic tarp to reference the movement of land occupation and the



square form as a historic reference to capitalism. Further, the exhibition observes black in the context of other colors, heightening our attention to the ways in which black functions among them in the paintings of Jack Whitten and Ulrike Müller.

Many of the works on view were made specifically for the exhibition, including a new site-specific wall painting by Wangechi Mutu that takes as its base a black pulp material made from magazine pages. "This color so indescribable isn't just or even a color, it's a conclusion, a condition and a combined existence of matted meaning and mashed matter," Mutu describes. Also creating new work for the exhibition is Adam Pendleton, whose Black Dada works draw on traditions of absurdist poetry with minimal compositions based on letters, lines and shades of black, both abiding by and resisting historical concepts of language as image or material. Glenn Ligon's contribution includes a newly created group of seventeen screenprints of James Baldwin's 1955 essay *Stranger in the Village*. Pope.L realizes three new works in varying media for the show, including two site-specific installations.

Blackness in Abstraction will look beyond painting to explore the ways that black abstract work exists in other media including sculpture, video, photography and installation, opening blackness beyond a purely optical dimension and positing its theatrical possibilities.

Intended to prompt a three-way exchange between artist, artwork and viewer, the assembly of works will raise questions about the meaning and function of the black art work. Leaving space for interpretation through unexpected and unintended reverberations between artists and objects, the exhibition will resist chronological emphasis to open and foster new lines of thought.

Blackness in Abstraction artists include Terry Adkins, Jonathas de Andrade, Rasheed Araeen, Kevin Beasley, Sergio de Camargo, Kōji Enokura, Ellen Gallagher, Robert Irwin, Sui Jianguo, Rashid Johnson, Sol LeWitt, Glenn Ligon, Laura Lima, Turiya Magadela, Steve McQueen, Ulrike Müller, Oscar Murillo, Wangechi Mutu, Louise Nevelson, Lorraine O'Grady, Adam Pendleton, Pope.L, Robert Rauschenberg, Ad Reinhardt, Fred Sandback, Jack Tworkov, Carrie Mae Weems, Jack Whitten, and Fred Wilson.



Adrienne Edwards is Curator at Performa, Curator at Large, Visual Arts at the Walker Art Center, and also a PhD candidate in performance studies at New York University. Since 2010, she has spearheaded Performa's year-round programming, contributed to the Performa biennial, and led its institutional collaborations with The Museum of Modern Art, New York and The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. Her curatorial work focuses on artists of the African Diaspora and the Global South, including a recent Curatorial Fellowship awarded for Research supported by the Warhol Foundation to investigate approaches to experimentation in interdisciplinary art in Africa, and 1:54 PERFORMS for the 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair. For Performa, Edwards has curated programs, projects, and productions with a wide range of artists, including Performa Commissions by Edgar Arceneaux, Juliana Huxtable, Rashid Johnson, and Laura Lima, in addition to projects and productions by Pope.L, Ralph Lemon, Senga Nengudi, Lorraine O'Grady, Adam Pendleton, Dave McKenzie, Wangechi Mutu, Will Rawls, and Carrie Mae Weems. Recent projects have included organizing and co-organizing Fluxus founding member Benjamin Patterson's first retrospective concert *Action as Composition* (2013), Pope.L's *Cage Unrequited* (2013) for Performa 13, Jonathas de Andrade's *A Study of Race and Class – Bahia >< New York* (2015) and Chimurenga's *Library* for Performa 15. Edwards works within the Walker's visual arts department developing and implementing artist projects and exhibitions, and expanding interdisciplinary scholarship and research while making key contributions to the Walker's acquisitions planning. She is a contributor to numerous exhibition catalogues and art publications, including *Aperture*, *Art in America*, *Artforum.com* and *Spike Art Quarterly*, and has given talks and presentations at a range of symposia and discursive platforms, including at Bienal de São Paulo, Johann Jacobs Museum, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art New York, Para Site International Conference Hong Kong, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Whitechapel Gallery, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York University, Stanford and Northwestern University, among others.

Sol LeWitt, *Wall Structure Black*, 1962, oil on canvas and painted wood, 39 x 39 x 23-1/2" Photograph by Ellen Page Wilson
© 2016 The LeWitt Estate / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York

Wangechi Mutu, *Throw*, 2016, Site Specific Action Painting, Dimensions Variable Courtesy the artist Photograph courtesy the artist
© Wangechi Mutu

Louise Nevelson, *City-Reflection*, 1972, wood painted black, 10' 1" x 13' 5" x 11-3/4", 20 elements plus 2 part base, 22 parts total
Photograph by Al Mozell © 2016 Estate of Louise Nevelson/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

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