

# Jessica Stockholder

## *Specific Shapes*

October 23 – December 23, 2021

Opening Reception October 23, 2021, 4 – 7 pm

Kavi Gupta proudly presents *Specific Shapes*, a solo exhibition of new works by Jessica Stockholder, acclaimed visual artist, elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Guggenheim Fellow, Anonymous Was A Woman grantee, and recipient of the Lucelia Artist Award from the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

The exhibition takes its name from Stockholder's latest body of work—the series *Specific Shape / Fixed Object*—which is introduced here alongside a selection of new works from three other ongoing series: *AB Photos with EWaste*; *Assists*; and *Text / Poetry*.

Stockholder's *Specific Shapes* are fundamentally abstract, painted by hand on the wall, and variable in scale from one installation to another. Their contours are derived from a process of looking at spaces between objects, bodies, and shadows in the visual environment to better understand the relationships among them, and to disturb the habit of seeing clear boundaries where perhaps there are none. Stockholder synthesizes these impressions into re-imagined Franken-shapes, given new life through the electricity

of coalescence.

Each *Specific Shape* is united with a color and paired with a companion *Fixed Object* made with a collection of materials gathered from many realms of life. The *Fixed Object* is concrete and unchanged as the piece moves from one locale to another.

Comprehending the juncture between the abstract and concrete in this particular body of work, and in most of Stockholder's work, requires that humans travel to the works' specific location and regard the works in communion with their own bodies, in real time and space.

As with her *AB Photos with EWaste*—which propose relationships between objects on the floor and images hanging on the wall—these *Specific Shapes* at once seem lovingly connected to and brutally colonized by their *Fixed Objects*. As with Stockholder's *Assists* series—in which sculptures can also function as supports for other works—and her *Text / Poetry* series—in which motifs co-evolve between images and words—the *Specific Shape / Fixed Object* series seems perfectly conceived to undermine assumptions about systems of connection and reliance.

As Stockholder puts it, “This work is about relationships and the limits of control.”

Stockholder is renowned for consistently reinvigorating the art field by subverting its tropes, such as the notion that abstraction is apolitical. Her work is created in response to, and incorporates, the contemporary flood of consumer products made with industrial materials and processes; it inhabits and confronts a world where those who make and consume such objects are also hyper-aware of the threat they pose to human existence. Stockholder leverages the ways our use of technology has altered our relationship with the surfaces of our devices, which disguise their internal mechanisms. Incorporating these concepts and objects into her compositions, she allows for myriad meanings and references to accumulate, resulting in works that remind us how important form is to all areas of life and that it has political resonance.

A particularly democratic characteristic of Stockholder’s *Specific Shape / Fixed Object* series is that she provides straightforward instructions so that anyone could theoretically recreate one of the works, à la Sol LeWitt. Unlike a LeWitt wall drawing, however, individuals installing these works have significant leeway for experimentation, for example, by modifying the scale of the shape, or the precise position of the companion object, or perhaps the angle at which the projector is pointed when tracing the shape.

The entitlement this bestows upon non-artists, such as curators, collectors, and art installers, jibes perfectly with Stockholder’s unique ability to make compositions that declare the peculiarity of art objects, while simultaneously suggesting that, as instigators of poetic experiences, art objects and other objects are not really so different. Many a time while walking the dog with my partner, one of us, having suddenly perceived some passing, sanguine relationship between, say, the yellow circle on a stoplight, the silver edge of a passing bus, and a white chemtrail from a jet, has pointed to this confluence of shapes, colors, forms, and light, and said to the other, “Look at that Jessica Stockholder.”

The delectable, punk-rock mish-mashery of everyday ephemera Stockholder mobilizes throughout this exhibition includes such wide-ranging stuff as electronic waste, tree branches, metal hardware, bungee cords, broken dishes, furniture, yarn, and paint. In this manifestation, the works hold court inside gallery walls, but like everything Stockholder makes, it might manifest wherever a world exists to support it in its intent—which, simply, is to make us stop, look, and think for ourselves about what we see.

#### *Artist Background:*

Jessica Stockholder (b. 1959, USA) is an internationally acclaimed visual artist and educator who lives and works in Chicago. Her public artworks have been commissioned by museums, municipalities, and corporations around the world.

Stockholder formulates three-dimensional pictures in space, which interact in unpredictable ways with the environments they occupy and explore how perception relates to feelings of chaos and control. The work employs the visual strategies of painting, sculpture, and installation—though it also resists the limitations such terms imply.

Stockholder’s work has been exhibited in many of the world’s most influential art venues, including Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Dia Center for the Arts, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Venice Biennale. It is included in such museum collections as the Art Institute of Chicago, Whitney Museum of American Art, LACMA, and Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. In addition to earning her BFA from the University of Victoria in Canada and her MFA from Yale University, she was awarded two honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degrees: one from the Emily Carr University of Art and Design in 2010, and one from Columbia College in 2013. Stockholder is currently the Raymond W. & Martha Hilpert Gruner Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Chicago, a position she accepted in 2011, after 12 years as Director of the Sculpture Department at the Yale School of Art.