



ART REVIEW: Jen Stark Plays with Space at the Surf Lodge

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by Scott Bluedorn

Miami-born and currently L.A.-based artist Jen Stark is known for bright, often psychedelic-tinged, rainbow patterns that adorn her two-dimensional and 3D work as a repeating motif.

In her current exhibition at the Surf Lodge in Montauk—developed as part of her artist-in-residence stint there and on view through June 28, 2015—the artist takes her ideas in new directions, playing with concepts of space, depth and reflection.



“Hole” by Jen Stark, 2015. Felt, wood and monofilament, 33 x 33 x 96 inches.

Hole, a new piece, plays with ideas about forced perspective through spatial distortion in a very sculptural way. The gradation of hues in the negative space generated by the series of holes in separate pieces of felt creates a “wormhole” effect. This exaggerated sense of space also seems to simultaneously flatten out as the viewer’s gaze approaches the center viewpoint.

From the “outside,” the piece is a minimalist meditation on pure color and space, perhaps made more unsettling once one enters that surprising interior viewing portal.



Detail of “Hole” by Jen Stark, 2015. Felt, wood and monofilament, 33 x 33 x 96 inches.

Glow, 2013, is an interesting work that uses reflected light as a medium to convey implied color. An intricately patterned aluminum plate set very close to the wall seemingly glows with a spectrum of Day-Glo hues emanating from the hidden reverse side of the plate.



“Glow” by Jen Stark, 2013. Aluminum, powder coat, acrylic, 48 inch diameter.

The reflected light of the piece is both beautiful and thought provoking as a means of expressing color in an indirect way.

Framed works on paper adorn the north wall of the gallery room, offering a flatter expression of Stark’s *Hole* piece. These function almost as studies for the larger sculptural work, and also further explore the vibrating color motif-Looney Tunes-esque explosions a la Wiley Coyote, perhaps.



Installation shot of various framed works by Jen Stark.

The viewer can almost feel the spectrum pulsating when looking at this very visually stimulating work.

The centerpiece of Stark’s exhibition at Surf Lodge is her rather monumental mural, which adorns the south and east facades of the building. Like her previous commission at Facebook headquarters in California, this mural takes the form of a cascading torrent of graduated tones.



Installation shot of outdoor mural by Jen Stark. Photo: Alex DeJulio.

The “drippyness” of the artist’s line is integral to the form, and may imply a fondness for visual dissonance. The relationship between the saturated color and organic feeling of gravity contrast with the white angular clapboard of the motel siding, and lend a slightly menacing character to the art. Images of “The Blob” came to mind, suggesting a mildly disturbing subtext for some viewers.

The indoor exhibition is a nice counterpoint to the large scale outdoor mural, and offers an opportunity to look more intimately at the artist’s vernacular and related ideas. I enjoyed the small scale of the exhibition room as the setting for these works that cast a more powerful spell than their unassuming dimensions would convey at first glance.

BASIC FACTS: Jen Stark at the Surf Lodge, a collaboration of the Eric Firestone Gallery with the artist residency program at Surf Lodge, is open by appointment through June 28, 2015.

The Surf Lodge is located at 183 Edgemere street, Montauk, NY 11954.
www.ericfirestonegallery.com

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