



Xylor Jane CANADA

Xylor Jane's third solo exhibition at Canada, titled "NDE," as in "near-death experience," did not on first impression look to be about death. Products of a conceptual, task-based approach that Jane began developing in the mid-1990s, these new works, more explicitly than their predecessors, depict patterns through dabs of brightly colored oil paint. Some of these patterns have their origins in printouts of numbers from the Internet. Others are based in a system Jane has generated that links the seven colors of the rainbow to the seven days of the week. If their palettes were more consistently muted, their grids more judicious, her new works might bring to mind Agnes Martin's meditative paintings. Instead, the dots form bright and busy rhythmic patterns—as they do in *Bombinating*, 2009, where they build into equilateral triangles fitted together hexagonally—or they outline numbers.

Xylor Jane.
Bombinating, 2009.
oil on panel, 44 x 41".



In an accompanying four-page, handwritten guide, Jane notes that *Shroud*, 2008, is based "on prime Julian days from 06.06.08 to 07.17.19, paired according to their day of the week." The document provides useful notes about most of the exhibited paintings, even if it doesn't explain what Phi decimals or palindromic number sequences are, and how they might be represented. "Dot boxes celebrate 28, the second perfect number," she adds, while the result, more simply, resembles the form designated by the phrase written below this text, ostensibly an organizing principle of her work: "Rainbow Quilt."

Looking at Jane's dense vortices and networks of dots, I was reminded of Joan Didion's book *The Year of Magical Thinking*, in which she writes, "Survivors look back and see omens, messages they missed. . . .

They live by symbols." It is clear that Jane has long been interested in nature and the unknown and possibly the sublime. She is thoroughly engrossed in systems and mathematics, and creates order and structure in her work, and perhaps in her life too, through numerology. Her obsessive practice brings to mind a wide range of artists—from Danica Phelps to Yayoi Kusama to Hanne Darboven to Bridget Riley—and, like Martin, who spent nearly forty years in Galisteo, New Mexico, Jane lives off the grid in a small community outside of major art-world centers, laboriously, if idiosyncratically, painting.

As with Phelps and the others, the trace of Jane's hand is present throughout her works, a reminder that nothing can be completely controlled or perfect. Mistakes are marked in pencil and sit on the surface, undisturbed. Jane does not seem to idealize precision, and is comfortable exposing the flaws that materialize in even the most controlled experiments. Her conceptualism is less mechanical and impassive than it looks, her self-generated systems more personal, and more about death (and perhaps life), than they initially seem. Her works are records of time but also reflections backward and projections forward, abstracted calendars of days past and days to come.

Jane has been known to work out her ideas in various forms—printouts, calendars, notes, and finally the paintings themselves—but the handwritten key was unexpected. Partially illuminating and partially mystifying, the guide offered yet another side of Jane's intricate exercises while the works showed how much her practice has developed since the early 1990s, when she graduated from the San Francisco Art Institute. Somewhere within the scramble of numbers and colors, grids and patterns, were, I sensed, fleeting glitches of emotion, like blips on radar, slow yet steady.

—Lauren O'Neill-Butler