

Jennie C. Jones: *Passing Tones and Broken Chords*

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Alexander Gray Associates



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August 14 – November 8, 2020

Alexander Gray Associates

Germantown, New York



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, Germantown, 2020

**Jennie C. Jones: *Passing Tones and Broken Chords***

Alexander Gray Associates, Germantown presents Jennie C. Jones' first exhibition with the Gallery, *Passing Tones and Broken Chords*. The show features new 2020 *Acoustic Panel Paintings* that further expand on the artist's research into the sonic, honing her use of materials and approach to color and form.

Seamlessly integrating the visual with the aural, Jones' paintings' titles underscore their connection to sound. Drawing on musical terminology, works like *Tempo Grave (Marking Dark Time)* (2020) and *Tempo Largo (Marking Dark Time)* (2020) reference slow, dirge-like speeds of music. Reinforcing this solemnity, the canvases' black panels also allude to mourning. Signaling Jones' return to black monochromes, these two paintings are the first the artist has created since 2014.

In a departure from earlier black pieces, *Tempo Grave (Marking Dark Time)* and *Tempo Largo (Marking Dark Time)* incorporate painted acoustic panels into their compositions. Jones describes how the process of allowing paint to evenly soak into the fabric panels to create subtle tonal variations "... became an existential back and forth struggle ... towards an impossible flawlessness." Expanding on the considered nature of her works' surfaces, she writes, "Underpainting is becoming more and more critical to my process. The layering with the 'memory' or passing time of previous brush work is apparent in the soft impasto and ghostly brush strokes embedded in the monochromatic surfaces."

Like Jones' *Tempo* works, the layered surface of *Bright (Red) Gracenote* (2020) also suggests the passage of time. The painting's richly pigmented planes juxtapose painted felt against canvas, and recall Jones' assertion that her surfaces "... are not flat if you move with enough deliberation, step to and from them as if within them." Highlighting the labor required to create such effects, the artist ultimately challenges the connection between the reductive and Minimalism, characterizing her own Minimalist process as defined by "maximalist" techniques to erase her hand. As she argues, "The idea of lack can be turned on its head in order to be perceived as pure potential and opportunity. Perhaps this relates directly to African American improvisation and creative utility, to working inventively with spare means."

Further capitalizing on the "pure potential" of her materials and evocatively spare visual language, in works like *Fractured Crescendo*, *Red Rest* (2020) Jones experiments with new applications of color. Foregrounding what she characterizes as a "hot" red acrylic, the canvas boasts a diagonal line





Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, Germantown, 2020

of bright red paint across two acoustic panels. In contrast to this slashing introduction of color, *Deep Structure (Oxide Rest)* (2020) features uneven bands of darker red pigment that accent the channel between two panels. The artist explains, “The subtle lines inside the picture plane rather than at the edges are a way of almost painting the shadows of form, which is again a shift toward amplifying objecthood.”

Emphasizing objecthood, Jones’ painterly approach ultimately interrogates the legacy of Minimalism. “There are social and political ramifications to rejecting ‘subject’ and embracing ‘object’—as an African American woman, much more is at stake,” she concludes. “Minimalism becomes a radical gesture empowering a refusal to sell my narrative or bodies.”



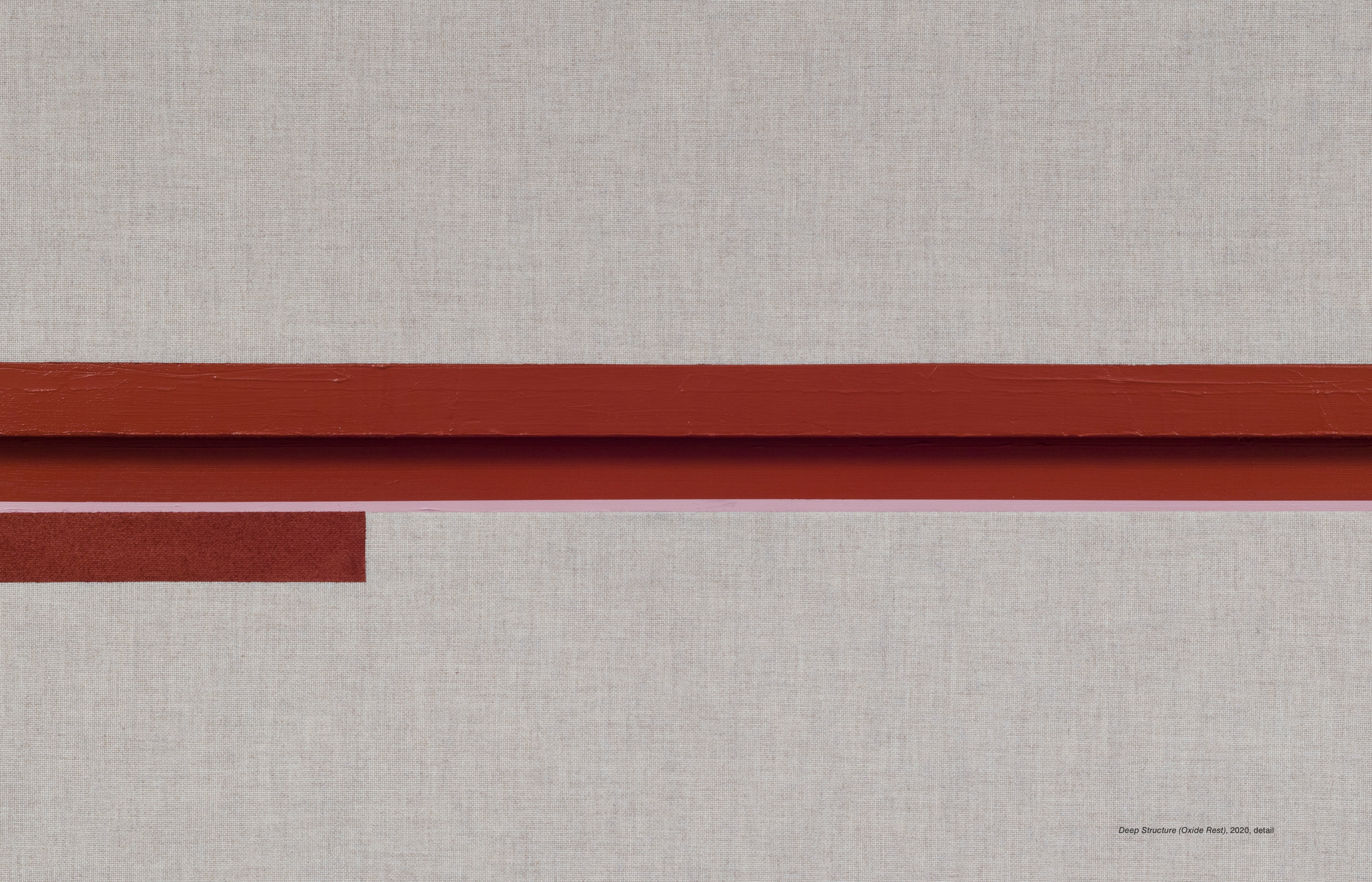
***Deep Structure (Oxide Rest)***

In *Deep Structure (Oxide Rest)* (2020), Jones paints horizontal bands of deep red oxide across two acoustic panels. For Jones, these lines are a "... way of almost painting the shadows of form ... a shift toward amplifying objecthood." Highlighting the material components of the painting, Jones' addition of rusty red acrylic draws attention to the seam between the two panels while its horizontal geometry, slightly weighted on the bottom, recalls that of musical notation for a whole rest.



*Deep Structure (Oxide Rest)*, 2020







***Tempo Grave (Marking Dark Time)***

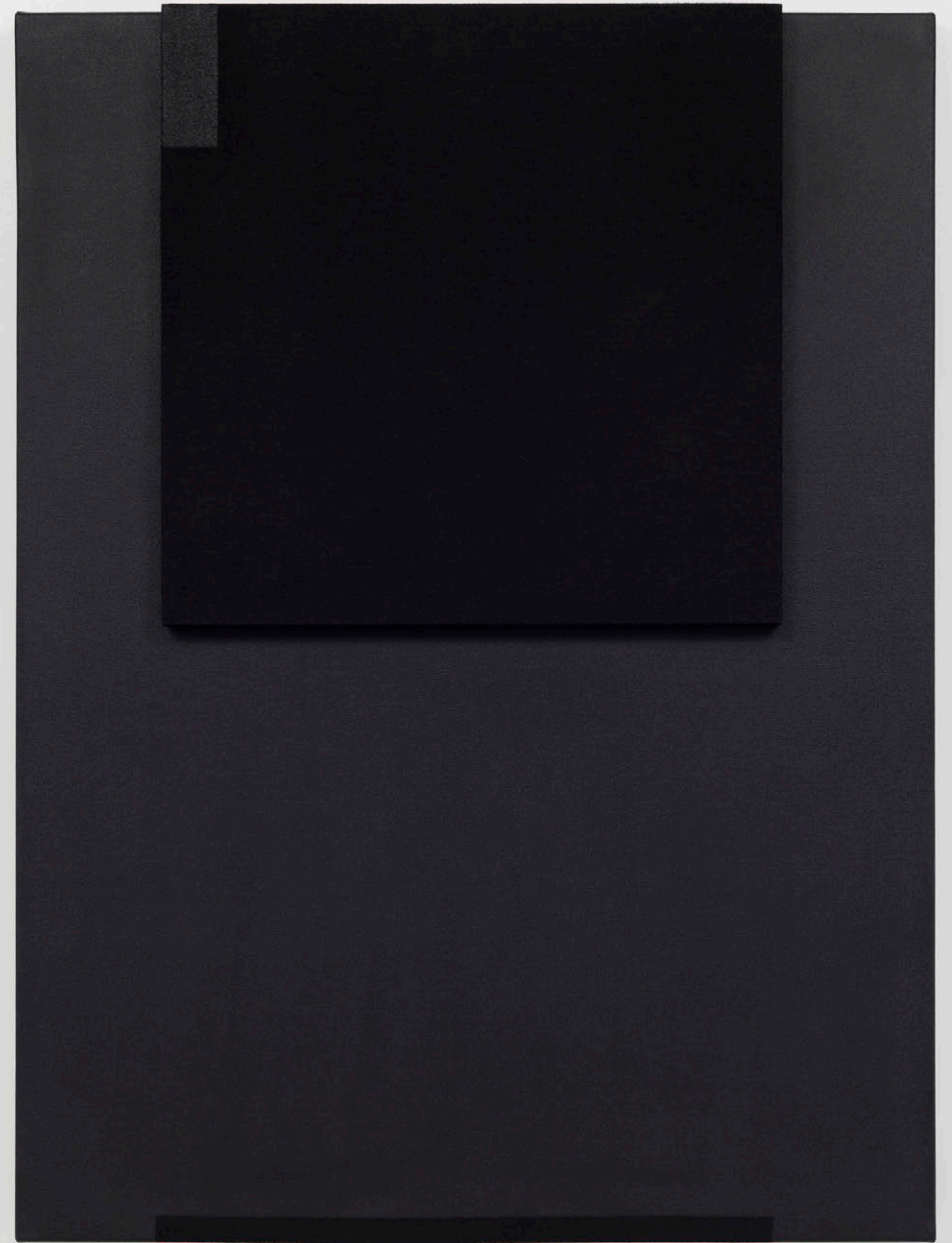
The title of *Tempo Grave (Marking Dark Time)* (2020) references a slow, dirge-like speed of music. Reinforcing this solemnity, the canvas' black panel also alludes to mourning. Signaling Jones' return to the black monochrome, this painting and its companion, *Tempo Largo (Marking Dark Time)*, are the first the artist has created since 2014.

In a departure from these earlier pieces, however, *Tempo Grave (Marking Dark Time)* features painted acoustic panels. Describing how the process of allowing the paint to evenly soak into the fabric panel to create subtle texture variations "became an existential back and forth struggle ... towards an impossible flawlessness," the artist underscores the considered nature of her works' surfaces. "Underpainting is becoming more and more critical to my process," she explains. "The layering with the 'memory' or passing time of previous brush work is apparent in the soft impasto and ghostly brush strokes embedded in the monochromatic surfaces."



*Tempo Grave (Marking Dark Time)*, 2020





*Tempo Largo (Making Dark Time)*, 2020





Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, Germantown, 2020





Installation view, Alder & Co. Barn, Germantown, NY, 2020





*Passing Tone (Soft Grey), 2020*





Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, Germantown, 2020





*Bright (Red) Gracernote, 2020*  
Right: detail









*There are social and political ramifications to rejecting “subject” and embracing “object”—as an African American woman, much more is at stake. Minimalism becomes a radical gesture empowering a refusal to sell my narrative or bodies.*

—Jennie C. Jones

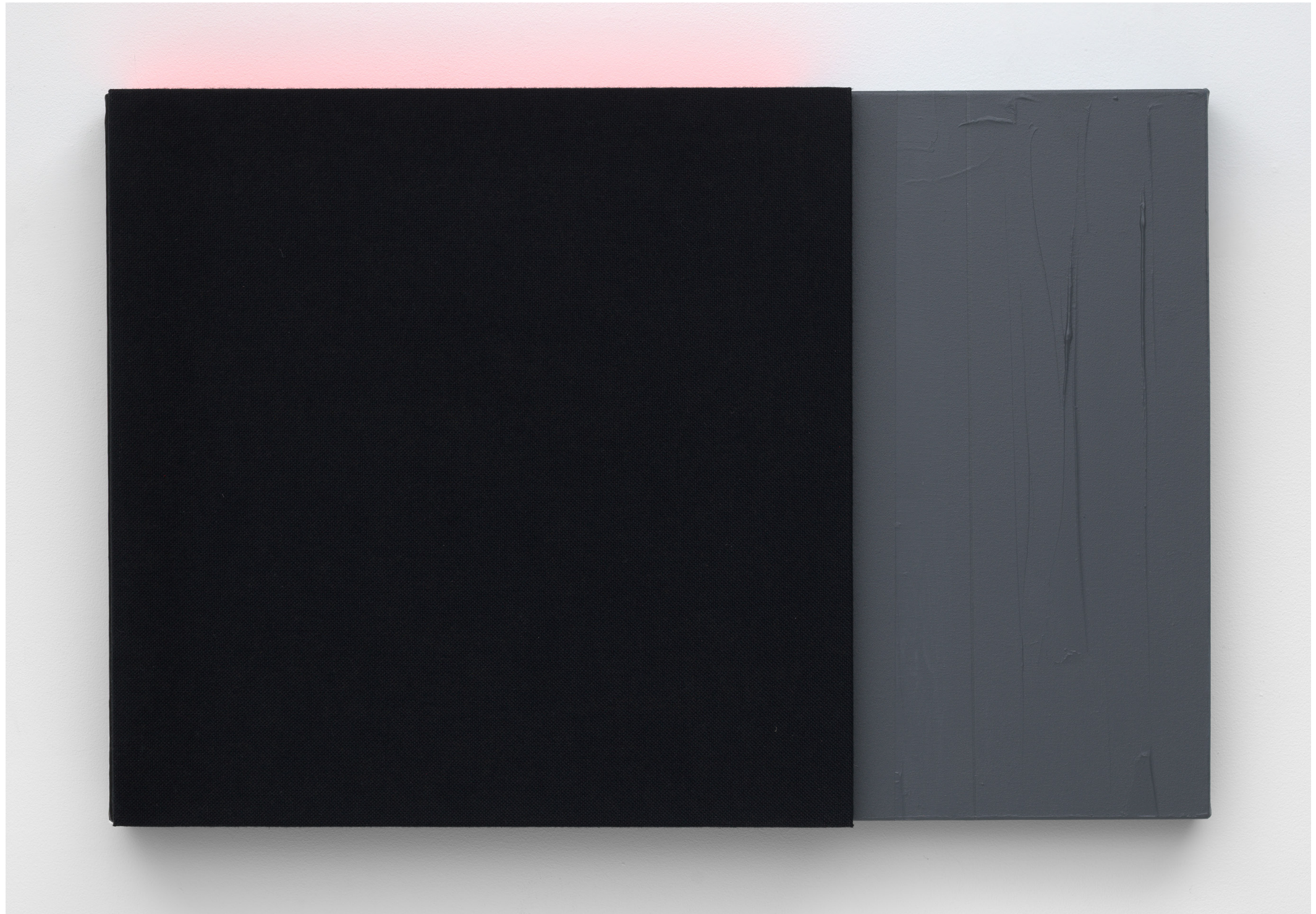


*Fractured Crescendo, Red Rest, 2020*

### ***Fractured Crescendo, Red Rest***

In *Fractured Crescendo, Red Rest* (2020) Jones adopts a new approaches to color. Foregrounding what she characterizes as “hot” red acrylic, the canvas boasts a diagonal line of bright red paint across two acoustic panels. As the artist explains, “[t]he subtle lines inside the picture plane rather than at the edges are a way of almost painting the shadows of form, which is again a shift toward amplifying objecthood.”





*Black Grace, Note, 2019*





*Open Measure (Oxide)*, 2020





Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, Germantown, 2020







Jennie C. Jones, 2015. Photo: Jason Frank Rothenberg.





## Jennie C. Jones

Jennie C. Jones (b.1968) was born in Cincinnati, OH and lives and works in Hudson, NY. Her interdisciplinary practice seeks to engage viewers visually and aurally. Drawing on painting, sculpture, sound, and installation, Jones' conceptual works reflect on the legacy of modernism and minimalism. Their unconventional materials and reductive compositions highlight the perception of sound within the visual arts.

After graduating from Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts in 1996 with her MFA, Jones created a series of drawings and collages that directly reference music and listening technologies. Featuring exactly rendered line drawings of speakers and cables and found image collages of sound systems, these works led Jones to begin to break down the components of audio devices. Elaborating on these drawings, in the 2000s, Jones began to use acoustic ephemera (cables, noise canceling instruments, CD jewel cases, etc.) in her artwork—what she has referred to as the “physical residue of music.” Transforming these prosaic materials into elegantly spare sculptures and installations, looping cables so that they became graphic lines, she adopted the conceit of sculpture as drawing in space. At the same time, these works capitalize on the potential of repurposed sound equipment to suggest audibility through its absence. In contrast, her most recent large-scale sculptures are mechanisms to produce sound—their forms capable of being played by the wind.

Further articulating the relationship between sound and physical matter, Jones' ongoing series of *Acoustic Panel Paintings* incorporate noise-absorbing acoustic panels. The minimalist works juxtapose these panels with solid and two-tone expanses of color, and draw on imagery that recalls the geometry of musical notation, including bars, crescendos, and measures. Developing alternative ways to illustrate sonic experiences, other paintings from the series boast narrow strips of pigment applied along the edges of their canvases—an effect that causes their compositions to resonate with an echoed glow of color. Meanwhile, more recent *Acoustic Panel Paintings* interact with the architecture of the spaces they inhabit, escaping the confines of the wall and becoming sculptural as they engage with the floor. Encouraging viewers to anticipate sound even in the quietest of environments, Jones states that the acoustic panels in the paintings are always “active.” As she explains, “I always say they're active even when there's no sound in the room; they are affecting the subtlest of sounds in the space—dampening and absorbing even the human voice.” Reinforcing this connection, the *Acoustic Panel Paintings* frequently

use musical devices—e.g. the tritone—as organizing principles for their structure. Seamlessly integrating visual practices with auditory ones, the works underscore the connection between minimalism and music, recovering the legacy of the black avant-garde.

In support of this recovery, for more than a decade, Jones has created sound pieces that microsample and distort disparate recordings. The resulting audio collages, which take black avant-garde sonic movements as their source material, continue the artist's project of challenging the dominant narrative of modernism by foregrounding African American cultural histories. Expanding on the conceptual ideologies that shaped these histories, Jones' newest works, which debut this year at The Arts Club of Chicago, IL; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA; and Prospect.5, New Orleans, LA, combine sound with large-scale installations and sculpture. These expansive pieces challenge the vernacular of modernism, emphasizing the artist's interest in, in her own words, “the merger of art history and music history ... [and] exploring the abstract languages they construct.” Advocating for a holistic approach to the twentieth-century canon, these works and others by Jones ultimately bring to light the systemic inequalities that shape who and what is seen and heard.

Jennie C. Jones' solo exhibitions include *Jennie C. Jones: Constant Structure*, The Arts Club of Chicago, IL (2020); *Compilation*, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, TX (2016); *Absorb/Diffuse*, The Kitchen, New York, NY (2013); *Directions: Jennie C. Jones: Higher Resonance*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (2013); *Counterpoint*, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA (2011); and *RED, BIRD, BLUE*, Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, GA (2009), among others. Her work has been included in countless group exhibitions, including *Ground/work*, *Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute*, Williamstown, MA (2020); *Riffs and Relations: African American Artists and the European Modernist Tradition*, The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. (2020); *The Shape of Shape*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2019); *Magnetic Fields: Expanding American Abstraction, 1960s to Today*, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO, traveled to National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. (2017); *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL (2015), traveled to Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA (2016); *Outside the Lines; Black in the Abstract, Part 2:*



*Hard Edges/Soft Curves*, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, TX (2014); and *Silence*, The Menil Collection, Houston, TX (2012), traveled to Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California, CA (2013). Jones' work is in the collections of the Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; and Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA, among others. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Rose Art Museum, Ruth Ann and Nathan Perlmutter Artist-in-Residence Award (2017); Robert Rauschenberg Award (2016); Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant (2013); The Studio Museum in Harlem, Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize (2012); and William H. Johnson Prize (2008). Jones is a faculty member in Painting at the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts, Bard College, Annandale-On-Hudson, NY. She is also represented by PATRON Gallery, Chicago, IL.

#### Exhibition Checklist

*Deep Structure (Oxide Rest)*, 2020  
Acrylic painted acoustic absorber panel and acrylic on canvas  
48 x 48 x 3 in  
(121.9 x 121.9 x 7.6 cm)

*Tempo Grave (Marking Dark Time)*, 2020  
Acrylic painted acoustic absorber panel and acrylic on canvas  
48 x 48 x 2 in  
(121.9 x 121.9 x 5.1 cm)

*Tempo Largo (Marking Dark Time)*, 2020  
Acrylic painted acoustic absorber panel and acrylic on canvas  
48 x 36 x 2 in  
(121.9 x 91.4 x 5.1 cm)

*Passing Tone (soft gray)*, 2020  
Acoustic absorber panel and acrylic on canvas  
48 x 36 x 2 in  
(121.9 x 91.4 x 5.1 cm)

*Bright (Red) Gracernote*, 2020  
Acrylic painted felt and acrylic on canvas  
20 x 16 in  
(50.8 x 40.6 cm)

*Fractured Crescendo, Red Rest*, 2020  
Acoustic absorber panel and acrylic on canvas  
Dptych: 36 x 24 x 2 in each  
(91.4 x 61 x 5.1 cm each)

*Open Measure (Oxide)*, 2020  
Acoustic absorber panel and acrylic on canvas  
Dptych: 48 x 36 x 2 in each  
(121.9 x 91.4 x 5.1 cm each)

#### Other Illustrated Works

*Black Grace, Note*, 2019  
Acoustic panel and acrylic on canvas  
24 x 36 x 3 in  
(61 x 91.4 x 7.6 cm)

*Untitled (The Glass House works)*, 2018  
Collage, acrylic, and ink on paper  
20 x 16 in  
(50.8 x 40.6 cm)



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August 14 – November 8, 2020

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Cover image: *Fractured Crescendo, Red Rest*, 2020, acoustic absorber panel and acrylic on canvas, diptych: 36 x 24 x 2 in each (91.4 x 61 x 5.1 cm each)

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Alexander Gray Associates is a New York-based contemporary art gallery. Through exhibitions, research, and artist representation, the Gallery spotlights artistic movements and artists who emerged in the mid- to late-Twentieth Century. Influential in cultural, social, and political spheres, these artists are notable for creating work that crosses geographic borders, generational contexts and artistic disciplines. Alexander Gray Associates is an organization committed to anti-racist and feminist principles. Alexander Gray Associates is a member of the Art Dealers Association of America.

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