

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Skarstedt Gallery is pleased to announce the exhibition, Jenny Holzer, *ENDGAME*, which opens on Thursday March 1st, and will be on view through April 7th, 2012.

Jenny Holzer's return to painting, thirty years after surrendering the medium upon her move to New York in the late 1970s, is a confrontation with amnesia. During her search for subject matter for electronics and projections, she found a number of redacted U.S. government documents where little text is legible. These opaque documents became the grounds for the new paintings. Holzer's newest series of paintings allude to the Suprematist works of Kazimir Malevich.

A spare word, such as "endgame," is sometimes the only trace of language. While the reference to Samuel Beckett's 1957 play, *Endgame*, is coincidental, Holzer's works share an aesthetic preoccupation with tragedy, absurdity, and human frailty, along with fragments of hope and humor.

Color, scale, and the mark of the hand are the only alterations that Holzer makes; the graphic geometric shapes are the censor's original marks. The surviving text is original. Holzer's subtle alterations exacerbate how much one isn't allowed to see.

In the paintings, blocks of black that constitute the censored document become individual brush strokes, geometrical passages of color, and captured gestures that indicate the contingency of the medium. In *TOP SECRET 7* from 2011, a redacted paragraph is reproduced as a chromatic fade. Black dissolves to purple and then into the continuum that joins red to pink. Before the paragraph ends, pale blue resolves to white only to open into tangerine and orange. When a document is rendered as painting, the viewer becomes attuned to the time of her looking and the acts that resulted in making of the artwork. After viewing, one can conceive of the censored document as a contrivance. What is it working to hide?

Holzer injects a searching notion of choice and deliberation into formal abstraction. When she paints government documents, she belies that bureaucracy is a blank face. She represents that individuals are responsible for the rules, choices of, and implementation of procedures that result in hidden information. By discreetly placing herself within these paintings by a selection of presentation, she hints that power and bureaucracy are, at base, a set of individual decisions.

The choice to reference Malevich was not so viewers could compare formal similarities or stylistic differences. Holzer's work is indebted to the Constructivist legacy and its notion that art could be directed towards social purposes. This referencing invites viewers to consider the conditions under which art is made. The optimism that attended the Soviet avant-garde was lost when the consolidation of power, banishment, and executions routed hope from the artistic and political agenda. In contrast, Holzer started in anger and mourning when torture and death were institutionalized. While rigorous and meditative painting cannot undo acts or by itself conjure optimism, it can suggest a means of working that is outside of cynicism. Even misplaced or fugitive hopefulness, the paintings suggest, is preferable to capitulation.

These paintings point to the antagonisms within society that can lead to new ideas and solutions, and, ultimately, ask us to think about how we shape the future.

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