



Sideshow Gallery 319 Bedford Avenue Williamsburg, Brooklyn, NY 11211

## PRESS RELEASE

Gallery hours: Thursday -Sunday, 12:00 - 6:00pm, and by appointment

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Directions: L train to 1st stop in Brooklyn, Bedford Ave.

# Dana Gordon + John Mendelsohn New Painting

April 13 through May 12

Opening reception Saturday April 13, 6-9pm

Sideshow Gallery is pleased to present recent work by Dana Gordon and John Mendelsohn, two highly inventive New York abstract painters. Both artists have exhibited widely since the 1970s.

Their work shares some basic premises, but it is the great difference between their styles that gives powerful evidence of the continuing vitality of abstract painting today. These are paintings that you have to look at for a while, from up close and from a distance — a cursory look won't suffice.

In Dana Gordon's paintings blocks of saturated color form vibrant fields activated by a freely drawn looping line. The biomorphic interacts with the geometric; chance interacts with control. As the free line moves across the blocks, it changes their color, making its presence known subliminally. Shapes join into groups and then separate and regroup. Associations appear and dissolve. Each painting has its own personality and palette, with the emergence of phantom forms and an arresting sense of space. But all of the works share a musical and hallucinatory presence. Gordon has commented, "The combined flux and stability in my paintings could be a metaphor for the ins and outs of a Talmudic way of thinking about painting that I see as inherent to the life of art."

John Mendelsohn will show work from three recent groups of paintings and drawings. The *Descent* paintings from 2013 have fields of red, yellow, and blue lines, mostly covered by a white medium. While wet, the medium was combed, revealing the diagonal painted lines, like a sheer veil split open. The paintings' titles suggest other readings. *Descent* implies movement from high to low. *Jacob's Ladder* is from Jacob's dream of angels in transit between heaven and earth. In *Benefaction*, the striated lines are like falling rain or fierce blessings. *Blizzard of the Blossoming* is from "And I was Alive", the last poem by Osip Mandelstam.

The paintings from the 2011 series *Illuminations*, have fields of glowing discs, partially wiped away, resembling lights or stars dissolving into space. The discs were made by combing gray acrylic paint into concentric circles that create moire patterns, and suggest a darkening expanse inscribed with light. The drawings, in acrylic and oil pastel on canvas paper, are a bridge between the two series of paintings. In these works, lines in relief and pulses of blurred color move in cascading fields.

These two painters have in common a sense of the limitless possibilities of abstract painting via a depth of beauty, and an engagement of the intellect and the emotions. In individual ways, they work by setting specific procedures and principles in motion and seeing what fruit they bear. In their work we see fields of forms that seem to allude to the crystalline, vibratory, or wave structures that underlie nature. There is an affinity between these paintings and how other cultures have linked the cosmos and human inner experience through abstraction — in rugs (e.g., Navajo, Persian, Tibetan), mosaics, stained glass windows, and in many other forms.

#### ON DANA GORDON

James Panero wrote last year, "While many artists paint widely, Gordon paints deeply. I can think of few artists who are as thoughtful in examining the building blocks of oil on canvas. Yet, rather than exhaust a simple language, Gordon has demonstrated how a few basic elements can captivate us with a kaleidoscope of visual interest. His paintings only get more arresting over time....Gordon knows 'what only painting can do.'"

Grace Glueck in her NY Times review of Gordon's show at the Andre Zarre Gallery in 1997, called the work "a very lively eye-fest." Helen A. Harrison wrote in the Times in 1994 of his exhibition at Adelphi University, "...these are beautiful paintings filled with the controlled exuberance of a carefully orchestrated spectacle." John Russell wrote in the Times in 1987 that his work "has a juicy hedonistic swing to it ...and is well worth seeking out."

Dana Gordon received a BA in art from Brown University in 1966 and an MA in art from Hunter College in 1969. He worked as assistant to Tony Smith and George Sugarman in their studios in the late 1960s. In the 1970s Gordon also made experimental films, which were given solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and film museums internationally. He was one of the founders of The Painting Center in 1992.

<http://danagordon.net>

#### ON JOHN MENDELSON

Lori Ellison wrote *John Mendelson: Shimmer and Blur* in her blog Cabinet of Cabarets in 2010: "Underlying all of his paintings is an interest in the very fount and source of things.... When I spoke with John, he said he didn't know that tantra means "weave" although he knows his history of textiles inside and out — and about the origins of Op Art in the optics of playing with the weave. The only way to be a tantric artist these days is without knowing it."

Ken Johnson wrote in his 2003 NY Times review of Mendelson's exhibition at Cheryl Pelavin Fine Arts, "For sheer visual pleasure, here's a show that's hard to beat....his paintings are soothingly meditative." Johnson wrote in *Art in America* in 1989 of his show at the Michael Walls Gallery, "Mendelson installed two suites of paintings creating a rhythmically architectural ambience, symbolically programmed....The effect was mysteriously exhilarating."

John Mendelson received a BA from Columbia University in 1971, an MFA from Rutgers University in 1974, and was in the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in 1971. He teaches at Fairfield University. <http://picasaweb.google.com/johnmendelson>

SIDESHOW GALLERY, founded by artist Richard Timperio in 1999, was a pioneer Williamsburgh gallery and is now world renowned and one of the largest private exhibitions spaces in Brooklyn. Many in the art community appreciate Richard Timperio and his gallery for the emphasis on values "of integrity, where the art itself is the only thing that matters," and that "visual art is a language of the eyes as much as music is the language of the ear."