



Visual Artist | www.jennalash.com | info@jennalash.com

JENNA LASH: GET RICH QUICK AS A PORTRAIT AND PORTAL

TO VIEW A PAINTING BY JENNA LASH is to participate in a push and pull of sorts, due in part to the intricate pointillist technique the artist often executes to produce her work. Following in the nineteenth-century Impressionist tradition, Lash applies individual, staccato markings in paint upon canvas that collectively blend into a coherent composition. When encountering Lash's work in a gallery or her Chelsea studio, the viewer instinctively responds to a magnetic pull towards the painting's surface, a desire to investigate the mechanics of the piece and the complex method with which it was made. After considering the artists' attention to detail, one likely gravitates backward again, moving away from the painting's surface until the markings disappear and once again blur into a single, clear configuration. This intuitive act of being drawn toward and away from the work mimics the painting's creation as well as Lash's intent: she, too, steadily approaches and retreats from the canvas as she forms the composition, and in a broader sense, the artist lures the viewer into a conceptual consideration that is both personal and global in scale.

Lash's primary source material is immediately recognizable—since the mid-1980s, Lash has referenced the symbols, national crests, font types, color schemes, patterning, and famous faces that occupy currency. Her pointillist markings call to mind the granulated printing found upon physical tender, as she depicts subject matter ranging from political leaders to endangered species, referencing bills, coins, shillings, certificates, yuan, pounds, and notes found in cultures around the globe. From limited-issue and special-edition to the common and quotidian, Lash has methodically rendered monetary symbols through an ever-expanding body of work that ranges from rounded canvases conveying notable women in history to large-scale panels that distort the faces of famous leaders behind geometric grids.

Lash's signature "points" shrink and swell in both style and application as she unpacks one nation's tender to the next, and just as coins and bills exchange hands and pockets, the through lines of Lash's practice mimic monetary circulation as her diverse concepts propagate and appear in various series. Such continuity is evidenced in Lash's latest endeavor, in which the artist references one of her own painted, crumpled one-dollar bills in a large-scale figurative work. Obscured with heavy dots, George Washington's face is framed within the bill's wrinkled terrain, casting shadows beneath that subconsciously call to mind the geography of the United States. This approach elaborates upon Lash's signature pointillist technique, and furthers the researched and considered art historical references that permeate her practice—her large-scale works include nods to Georges Seurat and Chuck Close, while this new body of work recalls Roy Lichtenstein's Ben Day dots.

Though the references themselves are recognizable, Lash's chosen technique and scale transform the familiar and oft-overlooked imagery of currency into an arresting consideration of material culture. Without question, Lash is aware of the multitude of associations each individual will intrinsically bring when viewing her work, informed by their own nationality, cultural background, and personal experience, among other factors. Lash embraces the depth of preconceptions inherent to the notion of money, and alongside the viewer, continues to explore the rich, seemingly endless connotations that money can have. In evoking these symbols, dialogues regarding Lash's work can organically evolve into conversations about cultural hierarchies, social class, nationalism, globalism, capitalism, gender issues, poverty, philanthropy, greed, generosity—even a self-referential consideration of the art object itself as a commodity. One becomes acutely self-aware when viewing a painting by Lash, as their initial response to the work is intimately informative of one's own views in regards to money, tradition, wealth, or value (and likely, some combination therein). In this sense, her paintings serve as platforms or portals, as invitations for the viewer to consider what it is that we value, as individuals, a nation, a society, and a culture.

A physical monetary object in itself is a symbolic representation of value, and from this, Lash's body of work speaks to the complexity, significance, and arbitrariness that are inherent to these chosen iconographies. Rather than impose her own opinions upon the viewer, Lash opts for her work to be a record of and testament to the material cultures that dictate our societies, regardless of time and place. Thus, Lash's paintings also serve as portraits—often literal likenesses that depict famous faces throughout history, but perhaps more significantly, they are portraits of society, if not mirrors that reflect our own individual values as we approach and retreat from their surfaces.