

galleria
raffaella
cortese

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viveka

PRESS RELEASE

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Drawing is the protagonist and common thread between the three solo shows by Silvia Bächli, Jessica Stockholder, and Allyson Strafella on view at Galleria Raffaella Cortese from May 20, 2021. Each artist has developed their own drawing practice differently, but with the shared desires to cross the boundaries of the sheet of paper, as well as overcome the limits of the frame and of the two-dimensional surface. The medium, in all three exhibitions, takes on a dimension of installation and expresses a desire for osmosis with the spaces it inhabits.

In via Stradella 4 Allyson Strafella presents her first solo show with the gallery, which previously showed the artist's work in an exhibition conceived with Helen Mirra, *fieno fieno fieno*, in 2016, followed by the related project between the two presented at Art Basel in 2019.

The title of the show, *viveka*, comes from the ancient Pali language. It is a term that for Strafella encompasses her experience of this past year. Though there are several translations, the one that resonates for Strafella speaks to the concepts of "seclusion + absorption" (in the words of Buddhist teacher Gil Fronsdal). This past year has been about sheltering in place, staying home, and being alone with ourselves due to the pandemic. Though uncomfortable for many, the time in seclusion from the world provided an opportunity to become absorbed in practice – the practice of mediation, the practice of drawing. Strafella's studio has been a welcomed refuge to engage with this concept of seclusion + absorption.

Over the years, Strafella's work has encompassed sculpture, writing, and work on paper. Her "typed" works, for which she is most known, manage to merge all of these dimensions in a process that has produced bodies of work consistent and recognizable since the early '90s. Strafella applied the repetition of typed punctuation marks—colons, parenthesis, hyphens, and dashes—initially motivated by the results of her misuse of the machine. She began typing to produce a purely visual outcome, developing a language in which words eventually left the page, giving way to drawing.

"In 2003, I worked on an organic farm where I drove a tractor, marking the land with patterns very similar to those I produced with a typewriter. It was a liberating experience about what drawing is," says the artist. "After years of considering my drawing space as a form of landscape, drawing on the scale of 25-acres had a special meaning for me. There are no limits to drawing in my mind, and it is with this idea of an expanded field, literally and rhetorically, that I engage with the world through my work" – Allyson Strafella, 2019.

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Strafella's work has increasingly found new physical dimensions. The marking process has become more and more reductive and essential, perhaps to the point of disappearance. What is left is paper, folded or trimmed, as solid surfaces of textured colors that are activated in combination with adjacent drawings, forms, and conditions.

The shapes one can glimpse in her drawings appear to result from a different way of observing the surroundings, infused with an illuminated experience of looking. In a year when our relationship with the outside has been so profoundly challenged, the seclusion + absorption that is *viveka* has proven to be essential.

BIOGRAPHY

Allyson Strafella was born in Brooklyn (NY) in 1969. She lives and works in Hudson (NY).

Allyson Strafella has been working with a typewriter, making drawings for 20 years. With patience, she finds the edge of form and formlessness, made and un-made. She has developed a drawing language that is "written" by type, and a written language drawn as mark and form. Her drawings are made by using a single punctuation mark. Her typing is like the "rhythm of the passing of time", and creates a sort of "prayer flags" fraying into the weather. By marking sheets of paper, individual marks into densely concentrated compositions, abstract forms appear in relation to landscapes, fields and the changing of seasons.

Her work has been exhibited internationally; recent exhibitions include *Rock me baby*, CAC Centre Art Contemporain Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland (2020); *New Typographics: Typewriter Art as Print*, The Print Center, Philadelphia, PA (2019); *Allyson Strafella. wander, Sleeper*, Edinburgh, Scotland (2018); *Spatial Flux: Contemporary Drawings from the JoAnn Gonzalez Hickey Collection*, Gregory Allicar Museum of Art, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO (2018). Strafella is represented in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and the Yale University Art Museum, New Haven, CT, among other private and public collections. She was a Workspace Program artist-in-residence at Dieu Donné in 2007 and has held residencies at MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NH (2002); Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, NY (2001); Skowhegan School of Art, ME (1995). Strafella is a Guggenheim fellow and a Pollock-Krasner Foundation recipient.