

# JDJ

Heather Guertin

*Ultra Marine Life*

September 4 - October 19, 2024

For Heather Guertin, painting is an act of transformation.

At the heart of her painting process is the printed image. Driving around Upstate New York, Guertin collects used books found in discarded piles at libraries and bookstores. She searches through their images with an open mind, allowing any subject matter the potential to become a source of inspiration. Many of these books are in the reference genre, essentially rendered obsolete by the internet: books about sea and space exploration, international travel, football, baseball, illustrated children's books, or those that promote the resources or natural beauty of a particular region of the United States. Mining a printed history that feels distant and recent at the same time, her paintings take this material and build new meanings and worlds from these relics of print media.

The found images, which she chooses for their line, color, shape, value and form—are what call out to her. Many of the photos that she is attracted to are of objects in space, and the resulting paintings take on a sense of deep illusionistic space that is uncommonly found within the realm of abstraction, which draws more attention to the painting's surface. Guertin rips out the book pages, splicing disparate images together like an exquisite corpse. Her attraction to these images often has a subjective, almost diaristic feel—as her thoughts and moods shift, so might her attraction to one image or another. Guertin's practice feels hopeful: her ability to find something special from what is overlooked, or essentially rendered valueless by others is as much an integral part of her creative process as is her unique and energetic brushwork and her radiant use of color.

Once the collages are assembled from the book pages, Guertin renders them into graphite drawings. This levels the playing field by removing the color and further reducing the imagery to line and value — the disparate images take on a sense of cohesion and uniformity that serve as the basis for the painting compositions. The process helps Guertin gain a new perspective, as she begins to see how the resulting paintings will take shape. Color and composition are informed by the found images, but the paintings take on a life of their own. Each work is a puzzle, and her painting process becomes a way to solve it.

This new series of paintings finds its historical lineage and inspiration within the oeuvres of several visionary female painters, among them Lee Krasner's reconfigured and collaged drawings and lyrical mark-making; Lynne Drexler's use of patterns in relationship to large passages of color; and Georgia O'Keeffe and Sonia Delaunay's filtration of the perceivable world through abstraction.

Each painting is composed of large, thick swoops of oil paint rendered in multi-hued brush strokes, and layers upon layers of textured dots atop fields of contrasting color that convey an Impressionistic sensibility. Just as the compositions of the oil paintings begin as collage, Guertin's mark making takes on a collage-like feel, as she layers many different styles of brush strokes within each canvas. Most of the source images Guertin starts from become completely unrecognizable as they pass through Guertin's visual filters, and so too is our visual read of her paintings: her abstract compositions can take on a fleeting sense of recognizability as we look for crumbs of legibility. The

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resulting paintings are, in essence, an act of transformation: from photographer's eye through the camera, from the printed photograph to the book page, from book page to collage, from collage to drawing, from drawing to painting.

Heather Guertin (b. 1981, Worcester, MA) lives and works in Red Hook, NY. She received her MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Guertin has recently exhibited at JDJ, New York, NY and Garrison, NY, Josh Lilley Gallery, London, Galerie Marta Cervera, Madrid, Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT, Commonwealth and Council x Galería Agustina Ferreyra, Mexico City, Broadway Gallery, New York, and Kurimanzutto, Mexico City, among others. Guertin has performed at White Columns, New York and the Carnegie International, Pittsburgh, PA. Guertin's novella *Model Turned Comedian with Social Malpractice* and *Publication Studio* was acquired by the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp in 2013, and her monograph was published by Hassla Books in 2015.