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Q+A with Jeanie Riddle on Painting, Parisian Laundry, and Her Inaugural Berlin Show



Jeanie Riddle, *TENOR*, installation view, McClure Gallery

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As the haute-ly cool Montreal gallery, [PARISIAN LAUNDRY](#), continues to expand its "nomadic profile" (launched last summer with a Pop-Up space in Toronto's [Drake Lab](#)), it ventures a project very closely tied to its own.

Parisian Laundry director and Montreal-based artist, [Jeanie Riddle](#), is preparing to open an inaugural, solo

exhibition at Berlin's [Sur la Montagne](#) (SLAM), this week, a project space that offers Canadian and international artists visibility in Germany's most established art scene.

Gallery director and artist [Drew Simpson](#) programs the gallery on an invitational basis, and invited Riddle, a fellow 2008 finalist in the [Royal Bank of Canada's painting competition](#), to participate in the residency and exhibition, last year. It gave Riddle the opportunity to present works-on-paper produced during her previous residency at [Triangle Arts in NYC](#), and produce an in-situ installation tailored to the unique environment of Berlin.

ARTINFO Canada caught-up with the celebrated artist to discuss her inaugural exhibition in Germany, the matter of abstraction, the qualification of the "domestic" in art, and the difficulties of straddling roles between the institution and the studio. We also asked the tough question: where does the line fall when an administrator assumes the role of artist through her own institution? Here is what she had to say.

To what extent is your installation a response to Berlin and to the Sur la Montagne institution?

It won't be particular to Berlin except for the fact that the work will be referenced, realized, and exist only there. But it's a unique show in that the paper works I'll be presenting are new territory for me. (They are made with my usual bank of materials: commercial paint samples, document adhesive, masking tape.) The second part of the exhibition is an in-situ installation from my ongoing series, "BLISSCPD," where I will be painting directly on the walls of the gallery, adding unnatural architectural renderings to the space. Essentially, I will be making abstract paintings on the walls.

Can you see the "accumulations" in your work having a new or different significance in Berlin?

Certainly, and most particularly because of my using ready made materials. I have researched hardware stores and will be using local materials as well as what is already in the gallery space. I think too, that there will be a transitory response to what happens and how I activate the space as a whole. Clearly, this unique exhibition will only happen once and this one time happens to be in Berlin.

Critic James Campbell [has written of your abstract paintings](#) that your "emphasis [is] on domestic artefact rather than Modernist icon," distinguishing your intentions from those of, say, Ad Reinhardt. What features of your work do you understand to represent domesticity? And what is your response to this classification?

I don't relate to a strictly formal approach to abstract painting or my interventions. I need space to have a semblance of control, though. My titles are important to me, they assist with the initial reading of the work, and range from an affirmative mantra like "Please Please, Because I Have Answers, I Wanna Dance," to a poetic syntax, "On Top Of Each Other (On Top Of Each Other)," "This Is The Inquiring Self," and "Not The Other Day, Not The Other Day But The Other Day, etc..." The painting's surfaces are engraved with markings, I am not just painting. The brush work too is less mechanical and more about the hand being present. The choice of color is also significant. I purposely use light versions of color which could read as feminine. Colors that feel livable: light blue, light green, light yellow, light grey, pink.

Could it be said that your installation work offers a greater directness and transparency to your investigations into the "domestic"?

Definitely. I remain attached to seeking notions of home in my work. My installations and paintings, for that

matter, are versions of traumas or joys that have occurred in my life. They are personal, autobiographical, and physical. I seek to disturb and disrupt space in order to familiarize myself with architecture and a process of memory building. Recently I have been indexing personal experience through materials and site and hope that the installations convey this sense of place.

You direct Parisian Laundry, a celebrated center for local and international exhibitions. How do you separate your administrative and entrepreneurial thinking from your artist mentality, and in what ways do these separate roles inform one another?

My practice is highly personal. Making art is where I amplify my voice, where I work out my everyday and am responsible to this language and thinking. I was hired at PARISIAN LAUNDRY because I am an artist. I think, react, and organize through the lens of a practitioner. I also have a small dedicated team -- we're three - - and am able to negotiate my own practice at arms length through my artist liaison at the gallery.

Do you perceive any conflict of interest in PL participating in and advertising this solo exhibition of yours at SLAM? Where is the line, for you?

I am an artist, and this excellent invitational opportunity was presented to me, Jeanie Riddle the artist, which I gladly accepted. My participation extends this opportunity to all PL artists through my presence in Berlin. Showing off-site in no way a one shot deal. This doesn't mean that my other position is lessened, rather, that my time management kicks into full gear. We have a very full season, with art fairs in Toronto and Miami and our artist, Valérie Blass, commissioned by the Public Art Fund in NYC and opening in November. This is my normal. I compartmentalize and occupy all these roles to their fullest potentials. There is no violence and nobody is dying. Sure, it may be complicated, but I don't know how to do it differently or to identify in any other way. I am an artist, director, curator, consultant, and mentor. I also happen to be an excellent cook and keep a tidy home. In other words, like in my paintings, I am drawing the line and it is rendered with integrity and strength.

Jeanie Riddle will be exhibiting at Sur la Montagne between October 18-30.

[Contemporary Arts](#), [Jeanie Riddle](#), [Sur la Montagne Berlin](#), [Parisian Laundry](#), [James Campbell](#)

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