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Laura Owens: painting as a physical force

by Agathe Moley | Nov 27, 2017 | Artviatic news, Exhibitions |



Laura Owens is definitely a name to remember. This artist

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unashamedly embraces an avant-garde tendency from the end of the 20th century in which the pictorial medium is taken as far as it will go. Her overturning of conventions boldly recreates the pictorial field, and it is this daring approach that the Whitney Museum of American Art reveals with its “mid-career survey” of 70 of Laura Owens’ paintings. With brio and aplomb, the American artist verges on rococo while comprising elements of the art of Sigmar Polke and Frank Stella: the hybrid implementation of motifs and materials typical of the former, and the outpouring of forms and vigorous lines of the latter. Furthermore, her work playfully blends and (inter)mingles references, styles and techniques. Pictorially, Laura Owens does not compromise, nor with her treatment of codes of femininity like the use of frilly brushwork and chocolate-box pink. This same treatment of forms through the construction of a pictorial space is seen in the work of Hokusai, for example, in the *Wave*.

The blending of treatments of ideas, brushwork, colours and conventions sweeps the viewer up with its trompe-l’œil effects and attempts to infuse the paint with life, like a spectacle bubbling with energy. Undulating lines, textual inserts, eruptions of wallpaper, impetuous colours: the aesthetic experience is never peaceful, particularly when the viewer is confronted by works of overwhelming dimension and the painter’s obsessive motifs (such as birds and trees). Their dreamlike quality merges with the frivolous and even comic nature of the illustrations. Elements like water, earth and clouds become merged in the volcanic design, the whole erupting over the codified forms of Owen’s predecessors.

Identity card

Name: Laura Owens

Birth: 1970, in Euclid, Ohio

Resides in: Los Angeles

Education: Rhode Island School of Design + Art Institute of California

Most recent project: *356 Mission* transforms her working space into an exhibition space in partnership with Gavin Brown and Wendy

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