

Playground Structure

1 August — 16 September 2017

Blain|Southern
4 Hanover Square
London W1S 1BP



Joan Snyder, *New Squares*, 2015, Courtesy the artist and Franklin Parrasch Gallery,
Photo: Fionn Reilly

The group exhibition *Playground Structure* takes its title from a 2008 photograph by Jeff Wall that depicts a climbing frame in a suburban park. The climbing frame is an invitation to play, and yet it also resembles an anonymous public artwork that might bring to mind a modernist grid or a constructivist sculpture. In the exhibition, Wall's large-scale photograph will be exhibited with paintings from 1969 to the present day by Amy Feldman, Mary Heilmann, Rachel Howard, Jeremy Moon, Ed Moses, Joan Snyder, Daniel Sturgis and Dan Walsh. The exhibition invites viewers to imagine each painting as an open-ended 'playground structure', reconceiving the grid as a utopian space of freedom.

The modernist grid has exerted an inescapable influence on minimalism, conceptual art and painting for over a century. In her influential essay 'Grids' (1979), Rosalind Krauss argued that artists used the grid in the early twentieth century to signal an absolute break from the past, and that it occupied a 'schizophrenic' position that could be either materialist or spiritual. In this sense, abstract art is usually in a literal or a tragic mode. But what if the grid, and its rigidly straight lines, were reimagined as the boundaries of a game, a space of ritual and repetition – or subjected to natural forces, such as gravity, or decay? What if, in the wake of modernism's demise, the grid became not an ideal structure or a portal to an otherworldly realm, but a climbing frame for the eyes and mind, an open-ended space where the viewer's imagination could play and improvise?

Untitled (1969), an important 'stroke' painting by Joan Snyder, is emblematic of many ideas pertinent to the artists in *Playground Structure*. Using a loose grid to organise the painting, Snyder introduced a sense of openness and sensuality, with seemingly relaxed strokes and lines, yet with colours and a composition that combine to resist any easy harmony. Snyder infuses the grid with the imperfections of the body, offering a riposte to its supposedly idealised form. The body is also an implicit presence in the paintings of Jeremy Moon (1937-72). Dance was an important early influence on the artist, and that kinaesthetic dynamism is palpable in his painting *No 1 / 70* (1970), exhibited here for the first time, along with the bristling energy of *Ice Palace* (1970). Among Ed Moses's earliest works were architectural drawings, and that organisational structure is evident in this 'wedge' paintings from the early 1970s. But the geometric forms in the works exhibited here are counterbalanced by layers of translucent colour, with small pools and drips of interacting cool and warm hues that imbue the jagged lines with unpredictability and impish freedom.

The paintings of Daniel Sturgis, such as *Just Enough* or *Care for Yourself* (both 2017), propose a space where the forces of rigid order and slapstick comedy are in a perpetual battle. Resolutely two-dimensional, there is the paradoxical implication of gravity, with small spheres seemingly rolling through the space. Dan Walsh's paintings such as *Flight* or *Circus* (both 2016) create structures of hard-edged ebullience, where symmetry and order wrestle with the sensual delight of the rounded forms and colours. The canvases of both Walsh and Sturgis appear like diagrams of a mind at play, while at the same time their work assesses, critically, the nature and limits of abstraction. Mary Heilmann, for whom the grid has been a constant goad and reference throughout almost five decades of painting, here exhibits *Pink Synergie* (2011): small and faintly cross-like,

its delicate pink surface offers a counterforce to its bold geometry. Rachel Howard's work also expresses a balance of forces. In *Broken Grid Theory* (2017), for instance, a faint grid gives the painting a structure, but the artist subjects its lines to dilutions and scrapings, introducing an air of entropy. Layers of translucent colour and bedraggled lines suggest duration, as if the painting was in a state of perpetual becoming. The paintings of Amy Feldman are expansive and playful, with the canvas itself an implicit grid where the artist can test the limits of her body. Feldman takes each painting as a space to climb, to take risks, where a mood of ecstasy and voluptuousness is balanced with dextrous control and a palette of sombre greys.

Playground Structure draws upon the history of serious play in Western philosophy and culture, a crucial idea in books such as Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794), Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* (1938) and Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1960) as well as the writings of Roger Caillois. The exhibition developed from conversations between Craig Burnett and the painter Daniel Sturgis.

Talk

Wasted in Play

Wednesday 6 September 2017, 6.30pm

Painters Amy Feldman, Rachel Howard, Daniel Sturgis and Dan Walsh join Craig Burnett in a conversation about the exhibition.

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Notes to Editors

About the artists

Amy Feldman (b. 1981, United States) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Recent exhibitions include: *Nerve Reserve*, James Cohan, New York (2017), *Breath Myth*, Blain|Southern, Berlin (2017), *Riot Grrrls*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, (2016); *New York Painting*, Kunstmuseum, Bonn (2015).

Mary Heilman (b. 1940, United States) lives and works in New York. Exhibitions include: *Mary Heilmann. Looking at Pictures*, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2016), *Sunset*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2015), *Mary Heilmann*, 303 Gallery, New York (2015), *Mary Heilmann & David Reed. Two by Two*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2015).

Rachel Howard (b. 1969, United Kingdom) lives and works in Gloucestershire. Exhibitions include: *Rachel Howard*, MASS MoCA, Massachusetts, US (2018), *Rachel Howard*, Blain|Southern, London, (2018), *Rachel Howard*, MACRO Testaccio, Rome (2016), *Sette Opere per la Misericordia (Seven Works for Mercy)*, Naples (2017), *At Sea*, Jerwood Gallery, Hastings (2015).

Jeremy Moon (1937-1972, United Kingdom). Exhibitions include: *Jeremy Moon*, Lühring Augustine, New York (2017), *Out of Nowhere*, PEER, London (2016), *Jeremy Moon*, Nymphius Projekte, Berlin (2009), *Jeremy Moon: A Retrospective*, The Nunnery, London then travelled (2000-2001), *Jeremy Moon: Paintings and Drawings 1962-73*, Serpentine Gallery, London (1976).

Ed Moses (b. 1926, United States) lives and works in California. Exhibitions include: *First, Look At The Paintings. Then We'll Shoot The Shit*, Blain|Southern, London (2016), *Ed Moses: Painting As Process*, Albertz Benda, New York (2016), *Ed Moses: Drawings from the 1960s and 1970s*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (2015).

Joan Snyder (b. 1940, United States) lives and works in Brooklyn and Woodstock, NY. Exhibitions include: *Joan Snyder / Forrest Bess*, Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York (2017), *In Print*, Hofstra University Museum,

New York (2016), *Woman Song*, Parrasch Heijnen Gallery, Los Angeles (2016), *Sub Rosa*, Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York (2015), *Dancing with the Dark: Prints by Joan Snyder 1963-2010*, Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New York, then travelled (2011–2).

Daniel Sturgis (b. 1966, United Kingdom) lives and works in London. Exhibitions include: *And Then Again Noshowspace*, London (2014), *New Works*, Galerie Hollenbach, Stuttgart (2013). *Everybody Loves Somebody*, Chinati Foundation, Texas (2007), *Daniel Sturgis*, Camden Arts Centre, London (1997).

Jeff Wall (b. 1946, Canada) lives and works in Vancouver. Exhibitions include: *Jeff Wall: Tableaux, Pictures, Photographs 1996-2013*, Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek (2015), *Jeff Wall*, Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris (2015), *Jeff Wall*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2007), *Photographs 1978-2004*, Tate Modern, London (2005).

Dan Walsh (b. 1960, United States) lives and works in New York. Exhibitions include: *Dan Walsh*, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York (2016), *Dan Walsh*, Galerie Xippas, Paris, (2015), *Dan Walsh: Satellites*, Galerie Tschudi, Zuoz, Switzerland (2013), *UnCommon Ground*, Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art, Providence (2012).

About Blain|Southern

Blain|Southern is a contemporary art gallery based in London and Berlin. The gallery represents an international roster of contemporary artists and is the world-wide representative of The Estate of Lynn Chadwick. The gallery's recent exhibitions include Bernar Venet, Mat Collishaw, Jonas Burgert, Amy Feldman, Tim Noble & Sue Webster, Nasan Tur, Chiharu Shiota, Ed Moses, Bruce Nauman and the critically acclaimed group show, *Revolt of the Sage*.

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