

Justine Hill - *Pull*

Exhibition Title | Pull

Artist | Justine Hill

Dates | April 14 (Tue.) – May 23 (Sat.), 2020

Location | MASAHIRO MAKI GALLERY, Tokyo



Justine Hill, *Feet*, 2020, acrylic, oil stick and colored pencil on canvas, 183.0x274.0cm

Courtesy of Justine Hill

MASAHIRO MAKI GALLERY is pleased to present *Pull*, the first solo exhibition to be held in Japan by Justine Hill, an artist based in Brooklyn, New York. The fourteen colorfully painted works on irregularly-shaped canvases fuel the imagination and inspire in many ways.

Hill creates abstract works that uniquely bring together primitive shapes with precise color selections. Her work is characterized by the combination of irregularly shaped canvases called “Cut Outs” which the artist considers to be “landscapes”.

Determining the shape is the most time-consuming part of the production process, with the shape only chosen after repeated sketching. The artist’s simple, precise lines do not point to any particular thing, but have a variety of meanings. They can be seen in the light of symbols that humans have used since ancient times. In fact, the “feet”, which are a recent motif in her work, reference ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. Once the lines and contours have been determined, the painting process begins. Layers of distinct and vibrant color are created through the appropriate distribution of colors, controlling the levels of brightness, a complex combination of media and the integration of various levels of transparency.

The graphic elements and patterns in the artist’s mark-making give a certain rhythm to her paintings. With respect to

these decorative elements, Hill has mentioned that she was inspired by art from the 1970s – the artists of the Pattern and Decoration movement*, such as Cynthia Carlson and Robert Kushner, being particularly influential. Hill’s recent work is more abstract: graphic elements have been reduced and patterns have become more regular. She has further developed her work by combining forms in tightly integrated way, adding elements of collage, and diversifying the media used.

The series, *Bookends*, constituted the artist’s first streamlined combinations of form. In her own words, “they each consisted of three pieces – the smallest number needed to form a group – and attempted to become a new stable form when brought together”. Furthermore, she explains that she has “always been an artist concerned with rules and in many ways the most dominant rules in our world are not of our making. Physical forces naturally trump societies’ governing forces”. The title of this exhibition, *Pull*, is thus derived from the laws of nature being integral to the underlying concept of these works: “I often discuss gravity when talking about my paintings because it’s a force we all unconsciously submit to. I like to think my paintings have an internal force that controls them and controls how they need to be made” (Hill).

In terms of what is most important in her process, Hill states that, “each painting is first and foremost about the arrangement of its parts. The way the individual shapes connect



Feet (Detail)

and relate to each other is what defines each painting. The key to understanding the work is about learning the force or energy that first arranges and then holds the paintings in their finished form". It can be said that this force that pulls these shapes together is another major theme in her work. From this perspective, regardless of their strongly two-dimensional and graphical elements, there is a three-dimensional movement that can be felt in those paintings she refers to as "landscapes" – an uplifting feeling, as if a stage play is unfolding before the viewer.

The artist's latest works, *Stilts* and *Feet*, encompass both the changes she has made in her work so far and her newest experiments. The motif of feet that emerged in the *Hold the Capstone* series (which will also be featured in this exhibition) is even more clearly expressed in *Feet*. It represents the artists attempt to investigate the extent to which a work with a more rectangular structure could be personified through the addition of feet. In *Stilts*, the feet have a more marked presence, stepping forward with a sense of purpose and direction. It is as if the negative space surrounding the feet in this work gives them a wide space to roam in, secured by the long, horizontal, arc-like forms.

Justine Hill's solo exhibition, the first for the artist in Japan, is an opportunity to see the evolution of the artist's ideas over the past few years, and to enjoy in the present moment, works that will surely continue to evolve in the future. We invite you to view them in person at our gallery.

* An American art movement of the mid-1970s to the early 1980s. Also called "P & D" or "New Decorativeness".

ARTIST

— Justine Hill

Born in 1985, in Tarrytown New York, Justine Hill makes abstract paintings using elemental marks and shapes that are distinguished by color, value, and opacity. She works by adding layers, which while physical and permanent, allude in form and opacity to digital painting tools. She works in both a traditional rectangular painting format and in sculptural, shaped canvases she calls "Cut Outs," reminiscent of Elizabeth Murray.

Justine Hill received her MFA from the University of Pennsylvania and her BA from the College of the Holy Cross. Hill's most recent exhibitions include *Breaking the Frame* at Hollis Taggart in New York (2019) *Bookends* at David B. Smith Gallery in Denver (2019), *Backdrops* at Art-in-Buildings in New York (2019), *Freestanding* at Denny Gallery (2018), and *Movers and Shapers* with Ali Silverstein at Victori + Mo in Brooklyn (2018). Her work is in significant collections including The Davis Museum (Wellesley, MA) and The Columbus Metropolitan Library (Columbus, OH). Her work has been reviewed or featured in *Art in America*, *Hyperallergic*, *New York Magazine*, *The Observer*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Art Newspaper*, *Artsy*, *Artspace*, and *Two Coats of Paint*.



ARTWORKS



Justine Hill

Stilts

2020

Acrylic, colored pencil and pastel on canvas

198.0x178.0cm



Justine Hill

Bookend 11 (Cyclops)

2019

Acrylic and pencil on canvas

144.8x104.1cm

All photos courtesy of Justine Hill