

# Thomas Erben Gallery

Press Release



"Ribbed Red" 2015. Acrylic and acrylic mediums on canvas (two-sided), 78 x 83 in.

## Dona Nelson

### *New Paintings*

September 17 – October 31

*Opening reception: Thursday, September 17, 6 - 8:30 pm*

Thomas Erben is very excited to present the gallery's fourth solo exhibition of American painter **Dona Nelson** (b. 1947, Grand Island, Nebraska). *New Paintings* follows Nelson's widely discussed contribution to the 2014 Whitney Biennial as well as her concurrent, critically acclaimed show *Phigor*, which led to the acquisition of her work by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Rose Museum, Brandeis University; Museum of New South Wales, Sydney; and the Kadist Foundation. While *Phigor* clarified the significance of the double-sidedness of Nelsons paintings – a material and conceptual interdependence between two surfaces – this show further explores the basic approach behind the work.

An essential tenet of Dona Nelson's artistic process is labor, in the most fundamental sense of that word. Her practice is built on the *work* of each painting, with the artist's hand clearly evident in the final result. Nothing is hidden, as every step taken leaves its trace, gestures accumulating into a complex whole. Countering a current value system focused on final product and assigned price, Nelson's paintings instead derive their charge from the time and effort invested in their creation. Their intrinsic value lies in the process itself, as each piece becomes a testament to its own coming into being. The labor of making the painting is the painting.

Continued...

Thomas Erben Gallery  
526 West 26<sup>th</sup> Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
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Nelson begins each new piece without any preconceived notion of a final result, applying paint or acrylic-soaked cheesecloth onto the canvas and following where the outcome takes her – staining, pouring, washing, tearing off. Actions taken on one side may be obvious on the other, or leave only subtle traces, sometimes overridden but never completely erased. Take *Ribbed Red* for example, where raised ridges channel and splay the saturated red, yellow and blue of fluid acrylic across one side of the painting, creating an unpredictable abstract image. The other side is a crisp stained field, a rich organic pattern that, while shaped by the vertical acrylic ridges on the front, forms a very different kind of painting space. The procedure is one of doing, seeing, reacting and doing again. Every subsequent action depends on previous ones, resulting in a complex layering where an earlier decision may dramatically affect later possibilities. This method requires a confidence gained through a lifetime of experience, of not knowing beforehand what will come next but trusting in the process – or just as important, the confidence to let go, founded in a healthy lack of respect for the end result.

Dona Nelson moved to New York City in 1967 to participate in the **Whitney Independent Study Program**. She received her BFA from **Ohio State University** in 1968. Over the years, she has had numerous, widely reviewed solo shows, at galleries such as **Rosa Esman, Michael Klein and Cheim & Read** (all New York); including a mid-career exhibition at the **Weatherspoon Art Gallery** (Greensboro, North Carolina). More recently, she was included in survey shows at **Harris Lieberman, D’Amelio Terras, Mary Boone, Robert Miller, and Boston University Art Gallery**. Her work has also appeared at institutions such as the **Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, New York University’s 80WSE, Bard College, Apexart, the Milwaukee Art Museum, and the Aldrich Museum**, and is included in the collections of the **Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Guggenheim Museum, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts** – among others. In 2013, Nelson received the **Artists’ Legacy Foundation Award**, she was a 2011 **Foundation for Contemporary Arts** grant recipient, and received a **Guggenheim Fellowship** in 1994. This Fall, her work will be included in *Feed the Meter* at **Galerie Bernard Ceysson, Luxembourg**.

The exhibition will be on view September 17–October 31. Thomas Erben Gallery is located at 526 West 26th Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor. Gallery hours are Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm. For more information, please contact us at 212-645-8701 or [info@thomaserben.com](mailto:info@thomaserben.com).

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