

# Thomas Erben Gallery



"I aim for my abstract paintings to have a quality of specific image and my figurative paintings to have a quality of material reality." Dona Nelson

## **Dona Nelson** - *Stretchers Strung Out On Space* February 20 – April 3, 2021

Thomas Erben is pleased to announce *Stretchers Strung Out On Space*, an exhibition of new paintings by **Dona Nelson**, her eighth presentation with the gallery. Praised for her individuality, Nelson has established herself as an artist committed to thoroughly exploring the progressive potentiality of her practice, wherever it may lead. Over time, Nelson has employed a wide repertoire of materials as well as approaches and processes. Each painting is individually conceived resulting in a great variety of compositions and images.



Installation view, West wall.

**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.

She has participated in the **2014 Whitney Biennial** and in group shows at the **Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Rose Art Museum, Contemporary Art Museum Houston** and **South Florida, Boston University Art Gallery, New York University 80WSE, CCS Bard, MIT List Visual Art Center, Apexart, Milwaukee Art Museum, P.S. 1, Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, and Guggenheim**. Nelson has received many grants and awards including an *Anonymous Was A Woman Grant* in 2015, an *Artist Legacy Foundation Award* in 2013, a *Foundation for Contemporary Arts Award* in 2011, and a *Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship* in 1994.

**Espace Tajan** exhibited Nelson's paintings in Paris in the fall of 2019, adding to a long list of widely reviewed solo shows at galleries such as **Michael Benevento** (Los Angeles), **Cheim & Read, Michael Klein, and Rosa Esman** (all New York); including a mid-career solo exhibition at the **Weatherspoon Art Museum**, Greensboro, NC, which was accompanied by a full color catalogue. Her paintings have been included in group shows at **Thaddaeus Ropac**, London, **Morán Morán**, Los Angeles, **Ceysson & Bénétière**, Luxembourg, as well as **Deitch Projects, Lisson Gallery, Robert Miller, Mary Boone, Canada Gallery** and **d'Amelio Terras** (all New York). Nelson's work is included in the collections of the **Metropolitan Museum of Art, Guggenheim Museum, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Rose Art Museum, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Perez Art Museum, Kadist Foundation, Weatherspoon Art Museum, Albright-Knox** and **Art Gallery of New South Wales**, Australia. Nelson's work is currently part of *Taking Space: Contemporary Women Artists and the Politics of Scale* at the **Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts**, Philadelphia, and *Never Done: 100 Years of Women in Politics and Beyond* at the **Tang Teaching Museum**, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY. Her work will also be included in *52 Womxm Artists: Revisiting a Feminist Milestone* at the **Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art** in Ridgefield, CT, scheduled to open in June of 2022.

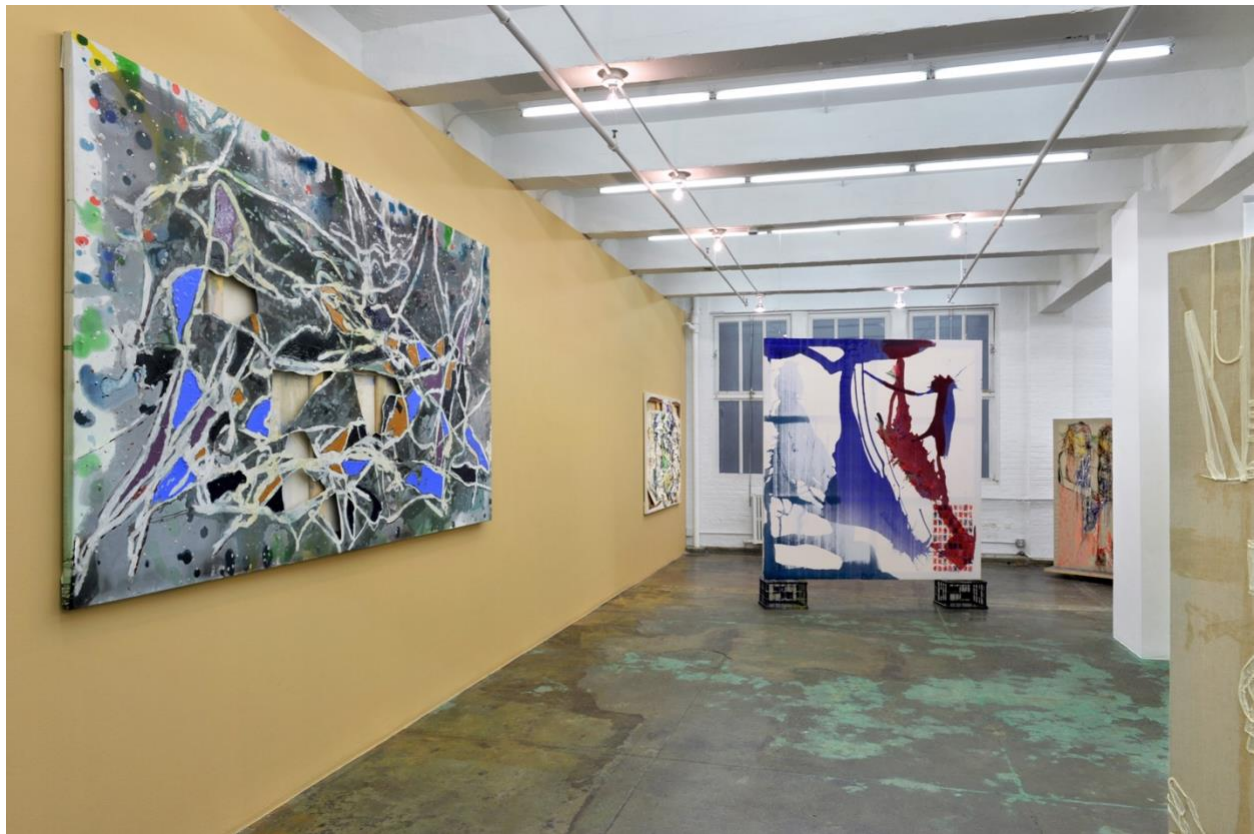


*Spring, 2020. Acrylic, acrylic mediums and petals on canvas, 6 x 10 ft. (studio shot)*





*Early September, 2020. Acrylic and acrylic mediums on canvas, 83 x 78 in.*



Installation view looking North.

Her celebrated two-sided canvases, for example, invite us to consider two planes which often are visually very different but - materially - interdependent. Not being able to observe both at once the viewer feels compelled to remember the opposite side, trying to reconcile how each forms the other. To do so, Nelson forces the viewer to circumnavigate the paintings, making the surrounding space as conceptually active as the works themselves.



WOOD, 2020. Acrylic and painted string on canvas, 86 x 85 in.





Installation view, North West



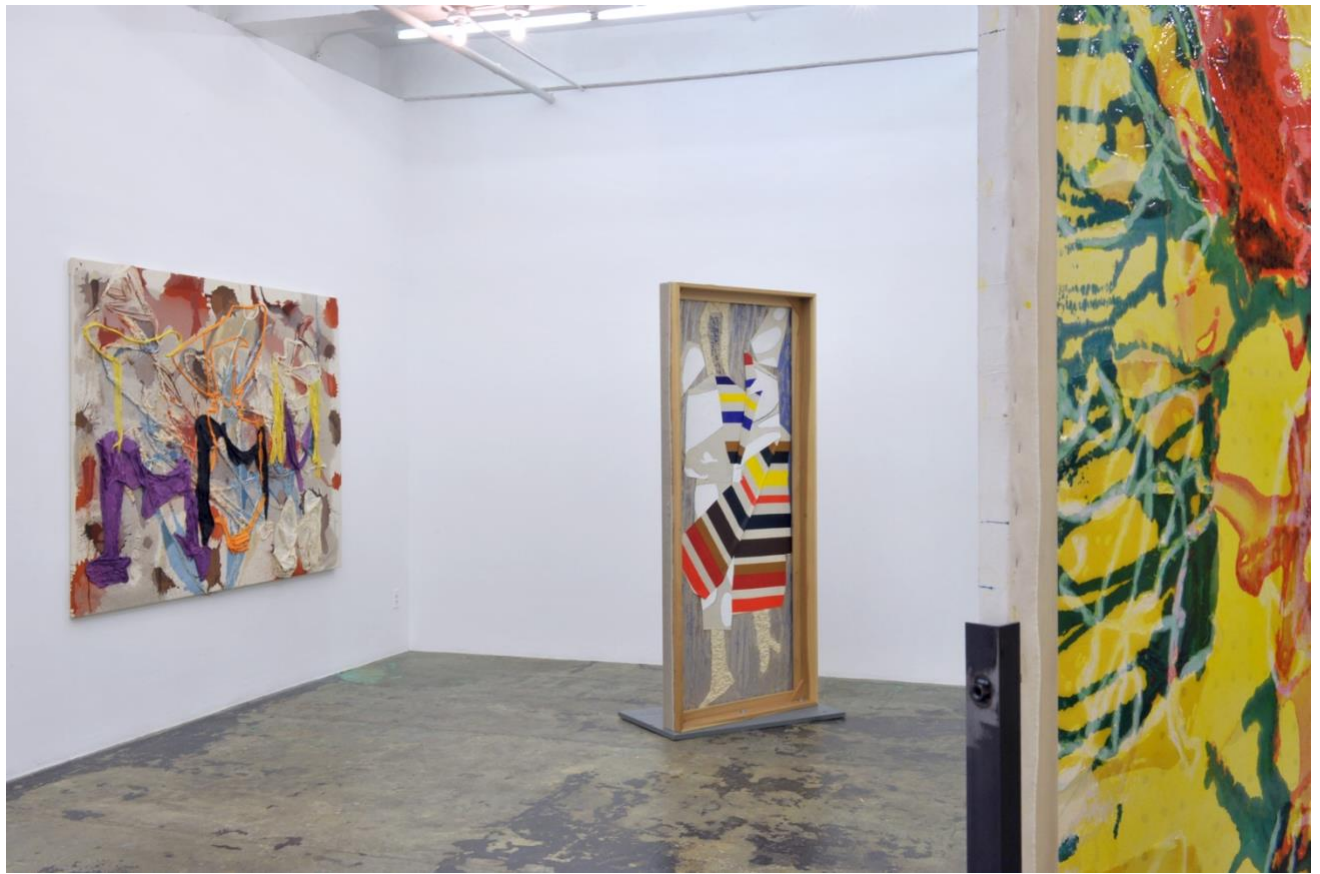
*Conversation*, 2020. Cheesecloth, acrylic mediums, modelling paste and acrylic on canvas, 79 x 56 in.





*Riley and Olive*, 2020. Painted string on linen panel mounted on plywood base, 71 x 43 x 4 in.

*Stretchers Strung Out On Space* features a series of “boxes”, freestanding figurative works painted from live models. Nelson prefers to have another presence in the studio which makes working from a model, or collaborating with her assistants, an intrinsic element of her practice.



Installation view, South East.





*Costumed Models*, 2020. Dyed cheesecloth, acrylic and acrylic mediums on canvas, 79.5 x 61 in.





*Rain Woman*, 2020. Canvas collage, acrylic and acrylic mediums on linen, 81.5 x 36 x 5 in.



Installation view, looking South East.



*Studio Portrait over Time*, 20016. Cheesecloth, muslin, painted string and acrylic mediums on lined, 81 x 36 x 5 in.





Dona Nelson in her studio.

Nelson has said of her work, "I am not an expressionist. I am a materialist." - not intentionally making paintings to express emotions or ideas outside of the materiality of the painting itself.

Part of Nelson's originality lies in her approach to not replace the reality of the canvas with an idea or a repetitious image. To work as she does, it requires complete presence in the moment and full focus on the physicality of painting.