



Oliver L. Jackson

May 11 - June 10, 2012

Since the 1960s, Oliver L. Jackson has created an impressive body of work, ranging from large-scale paintings to marble sculptures, that elicits an intensely physical response from the viewer through its immediacy and expressiveness. This Front Room presentation is the artist's first solo exhibition in a St. Louis museum in over twenty years and features a selection of six monotypes from a larger series never before exhibited in public. Often considered the most painterly of printmaking processes, monotype involves the application of layers of paint or ink to a smooth rather than etched surface in order to retain the ink necessary to create multiple prints. Once the pigment is fully transferred to paper, it results in a unique print that cannot be reproduced. Jackson's monotypes, created in September 2006 with Kathryn Kane at Smith Andersen Editions in Palo Alto, California, encapsulate his visceral art practice and further develop his formal and conceptual concerns regarding the push and pull of figure and ground, gesture and effect.

The works in Jackson's Front Room presentation are characterized by a consistent use of deeply saturated blue, brown, and purple. These colors appear across shifting compositions into which he has overlaid, scraped, and etched figures and other forms. Throughout Jackson's oeuvre, the figure is a key element of his visual vocabulary, loosely functioning as an archetype or symbol rather than a narrative signifier. Prominent in *Monotypes XIII, XIV, and XV*, such imagery recedes beneath frenzied marks in *Monotypes XVI, XVII, and XVIII*. In the *Monotypes*, Jackson imbues the printmaking process with the active qualities of painting, bringing together spatial fields, figures, and colors in dynamic tension.

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Oliver L. Jackson (b. 1935, St. Louis, MO) lives and works in Oakland, CA. From 1968-1971, he was an affiliate of the Black Artists Group of St. Louis, or BAG (1968-72). Jackson collaborated with other BAG artists, most notably the experimental jazz composer and musician Julius Hemphill (1938-1995), to explore and advocate for African-American cultural expression. Involved with BAG as both an artist and educator, Jackson initiated Program Uhuru (1967-68) at the Pruitt-Igoe public housing project to bring art programs to low-income African-Americans. Committed to the idea of an inclusive cultural landscape that connected African-Americans to their African heritage, he was also instrumental in introducing Pan-African Studies to several university programs in St. Louis, Ohio, and northern California, where he ultimately settled to teach at California State University, Sacramento from 1971-2002. Jackson has presented his work in solo exhibitions at museums and galleries such as the Metropolitan Gallery, St. Louis (2008); Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (2000); St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis (1990); MATRIX Program for Contemporary Art, University of California, Berkeley Art Museum (1983); and the Seattle Art Museum (1982). His art has been featured extensively in group exhibitions around the world and is in collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; St. Louis Art Museum; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, among many others. Jackson is the recipient of several awards, including a Painting and Sculpture Award, Flintridge Foundation (2004); a Fleishhacker Foundation Eureka Fellowship Award (1993); and an Award in Painting from the National Endowment for the Arts (1980-81). In January 2012, he was the Howard and Yoneko Droste Visiting Research Fellow in the Art Department of the University of Hawaii – Hilo. He holds an MFA from the University of Iowa, Iowa City (1963) and a BFA from Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington (1958).

Oliver L. Jackson is organized by the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis and curated by Kelly Shindler, Assistant Curator.

Special thanks to Donald M. Suggs and Diane Roby.

Image: Oliver L. Jackson, *Monotype XVIII, 2006*, 2006. Printer's ink on paper, 60 x 41 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Anne Kohs and Associates, Inc. Photo: M. Lee Fatherree.

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