

DONA NELSON

Selected Paintings, 2019 – 2023

April 5 – May 17, 2024

Opening Reception and Artist Talk: Friday, April 5, 5pm – 7pm

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Dona Nelson, *Day and Night*, 2023, acrylic paint and acrylic mediums on canvas, 106 x 88 inches



Locks Gallery is honored to announce its first solo exhibition with the renowned painter **Dona Nelson** (b. 1947). Nelson has been recognized as one of the most technically innovative painters since the 1970s. The exhibition features a selection of recent single and double-sided paintings from 2019 to the present and will be accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by Terry R. Myers.

Nelson's gestural, richly complex compositions demonstrate a rigorous commitment to exploring the possibilities of material invention. Since 2003, the artist has been making double-sided paintings displayed on steel stands, liberating their canvases from the wall. These paintings are novel in the way that each side is distinct yet "strongly interconnected, both conceptually and artistically" as put by art critic Brooks Adams. Nelson initially works on each canvas from above, laying them face down on milk crates without looking at the underside. In a process of staining and soaking with fluid acrylics and then subsequently re-stretching the canvas, each material and technique is extended to its maximum potential. "Material is intelligent, more intelligent than meanings I or others might ascribe to my painting," says Nelson.



These bilateral compositions explore the possibilities of contrasting physical surfaces which are distinct yet inseparable, entangled in ways beyond what the viewer can see. In the case of *Day and Night* (2023), one side of the canvas reveals a sea of deep blues, layered with traces of thick, gel soaked ropes of cheesecloth that directed the watery paint seeping through to the other side, forming a tree-like composition of reds, oranges, and greens while blues just barely peek through. Other times, Nelson works on both sides of the canvas to create a one-sided piece – such as *First Painting* (2021), which fuses acrylic mediums of varying fluidity into a dynamic interplay of layered colors and textures. In each case, the artist plays with gravity to synergistically create each composition using processes that are spontaneous and, in some ways, alchemically mysterious.



Dona Nelson, *First Painting*, 2021, acrylic paint and acrylic mediums on canvas, 106 x 88 inches

Nelson's often monumental paintings activate viewers' bodies and demand attention beyond that of a photograph or two-dimensional piece. The presence of each painting as an object is given primacy. As they said in a 1994 interview, "People talk endlessly about the computer age and technological invention and the future, but the body still is the center of our experience. And painting is always for me about that physical, sensory experience which isn't separate from ideas."

Dona Nelson received their B.F.A. from Ohio State University in 1968 and studied at the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program that same year. They participated in the 2014 Whitney Biennial and have been the subject of survey exhibitions at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (1999), the Weatherspoon Museum of Fine Art (2000), and the Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College (2018). Nelson's paintings are included in museum collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Whitney Museum, the Carnegie Museum of Art, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the Museum of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. They received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1994 and a grant from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts in 2011. From 1992 to 2023, Nelson taught as Professor of Painting and Drawing at the Tyler School of Art and Architecture, Temple University in Philadelphia. Nelson lives and works in Lansdale, Pennsylvania.

This exhibition will be on view in the second floor gallery and open to the public Tuesday through Saturday, 10am – 6pm.

For all press inquiries, please contact Adrianna Brusie, abusie@locksgallery.com.