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The Art Show



Dopamine Regression (detail), 2010, wool warp, weft, selvedge cords, and aniline dyes, 70 x 48 inches

For the 2021 edition of The Art Show, Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to present a selection of recent tapestries by Melissa Cody, all created between 2009 and 2021. The exhibition will be the artist's first with the gallery, and the first time many of the works are shown publicly.

A fourth-generation Navajo weaver, Cody is known for her intricate tapestries. The artist's work is often associated with the Germantown Revival, a stylistic movement named after the government wool from Germantown, Pennsylvania, that was supplied to the Navajo during the time of the Long Walk. The weaving style was characterized by a complex interaction of traditional and historical contingencies: vivid commercial dyes and new economic pressures prompted enterprising Navajo weavers to adapt, creating bold new textiles. The commercial viability of the craft became a means of continuance, even as it altered it.

Cody's work carries that balance of tradition, history, and contemporaneity forward. Working on a traditional Navajo loom, the artist recombines Navajo patterns into sophisticated geometric overlays and haptic color schemes. Cody initially worried

about how her tribal elders would respond to her departure from tradition, but was relieved when they embraced the work, pointing out its potential to not only appeal to art enthusiasts, but to engage a younger generation in the craft. “In 50 or 100 years,” she says, “my work will be considered traditional Navajo.”

In her recent works—similar to *World Traveler* (2014), *Deep Brain Stimulation* (2011), and *Dopamine Regression* (2010) in both their monumental scale and intricate visual qualities—Cody’s pattern-like layering reaches its apotheosis. Drawing together her study of printmaking, contemporary art, and traditional weaving techniques, the artist’s bold juxtapositions of color and pattern achieve stunning depth, breaking from the conventionally flat visual plane. In the works, Cody emphasizes the warp and weft’s grid-like structure, introducing sharp black lines that meander above the traditional patterns.

In *Deep Brain Stimulation* (2011), Cody utilizes the cross motif, a symbol for the Spider Woman who brought weaving to the people. In the center of the composition, Cody inverts the tapestry’s color scheme. At the boundaries, her black crosses abruptly turn white, blues become reds, as if by some operation on Photoshop. “I’m a child of ’80s video game culture: Pac-Man, Frogger, Nintendo,” Cody points out, “I grew up with this world of pixelation.” Cody approaches weaving as an ever-evolving craft tradition and an art form.

Melissa Cody’s work has been featured in many museums and galleries, such as: the Stark Museum of Art (2014, Orange, Texas); Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Institute of American Indian Arts (2017–2018, Santa Fe); Ingham Chapman Gallery, University of New Mexico (2018, Albuquerque); Navajo Nation Museum (2018); SITE (2018–2019, Santa Fe); MASS Gallery (2019, Austin); Heard Museum (2019, Phoenix); Exploratorium (2019, San Francisco); Museum of Northern Arizona (2019, Flagstaff); Rebecca Camacho Presents (2019, San Francisco); and National Gallery of Canada (2019–2020, Ottawa). Her works are featured in a number of museum collections, including those of the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas; the Minneapolis Institute of Arts; and the Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas.

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to represent Melissa Cody.

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