The Art and Life of Jessica Park

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This slide lecture features a variety of Jessica Park’s work, from her early color abstractions and drawings to her more recent renderings of public monuments. The evolution of the artist’s work is in evidence from this presentation, which explores the intersection of artistic inspiration and craft with a highly personal vision related to Jessica’s autism.

Jessica’s art is also discussed in relation to the decorative art tradition and is compared to the variety of outsider art with which she keeps company. Jessica’s art creation is presented with many examples as the audience is introduced to a very unusual and talented artist.

Samples from the lecture follow
Untitled #1, 1968
Poster Paint on Paper
12x18”

Collection of Clara & David Park
This abstraction, accomplished at age 10, is quite sophisticated in comparison with Jessy’s earlier attempts at painting, which were dominated by simple shapes-lines, circles, triangles-always carefully segmented, no overlapping; one color applied at a time. Here multiple colors fill nearly all the paper. Although the rudiments of a design are evident, the shapes are amorphous. Free flowing applications of paint create interesting shapes that remain segmented. Colors do not mix, but tonal differentiation is evident creating a dance between light and dark hues, warm and cool spots on the paper.

This work is more than child’s play and points to a future where form, color and variations in tone have become hallmarks of the artist’s work. The repetitive marks of Jessy’s childhood, so typical of people with autism, are beginning to evolve here into a more elaborate ordering principle that includes a creative eye and growing aesthetic sensibility.
The Great Stained Glass Doors

#8 in Winter at Nighttime, 1985
Acrylic on paper, c 17x12"
Collection of Clara & David Park

#9 in Summer near Sunset, 1988
Acrylic on paper, c 17x12"
Collection of Clara & David Park
Since 1983, when Jessy sketched these doors on a visit to her Aunt Adrienne’s house in Brooklyn, the artist has produced 15 versions or variations from the same drawn template. Each set of French doors with their delicate stained glass pattern is different from all the others. The color combinations, of course, vary, but the pictures’ lighting alters with the time of day and season, as does the view behind the porch, which is dressed in different scenery with sunsets and star patterns or various shades of blue appearing behind a tree, barren in winter or leafed out in the warm tones of summer.
The Great Stained Glass Doors

#12 in Winter Daytime with Deep-Blue Sky
and a Light Pillar, 2000
Acrylic on paper, c. 17x12”
Collection of Leslie Rondin

#13 in Winter Late Afternoon, 2005
Acrylic on paper, c.17x12”
Owner unkown
Jessy’s innate sense of color patterning is at work here, and each picture has a unique decorative quality—repetitions and variations beautifully compliment each other in this series.

The floor boards suggest a single point perspective, but vertical color planes interrupt our eye in a pleasing and uncanny manner, with the open doors providing some three dimensionality to the grid of horizontal and vertical lines.

And finally, what is that rectangular shape that darkens the right hand door in the daylight representations? Another personal element added by the artist? Or, only a refrigerator on the porch casting a shadow? Do we have the inclusion of a detail because it pleases the artist—in this case a shadow, one of Jessy’s “enthusiasms”? Or, is autistic literalism at work and the shadow is included just because it is there?

Regardless of our speculations, these works represent the exploration of a theme in a manner not untypical of many artists. Claude Monet’s series paintings come to mind perhaps, as do the patterns of later 19th Century graphic design. Note the cloisonnisme or segmented color that mimics stained glass, the sharp outlines and fully saturated colors. Jessica Park surprises and delights us with The Great Stained Glass Doors, which have proven to be widely popular.
The Lecture can be augmented, if requested, by some original Park paintings if a suitable space is available.

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Fees are negotiable; travel expenses included.