

PAULA COOPER GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JENNIFER BARTLETT

521 W 21st Street

March 26 – April 23, 2016

NEW YORK – The Paula Cooper Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of diptych oil paintings by Jennifer Bartlett, created between 2007 and 2011. This exhibition marks the artist's first gallery show in New York since 2011. Her long history with the Paula Cooper Gallery includes the landmark presentation in May 1976 of *Rhapsody*, Bartlett's seminal project composed of 987 steel plates, now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Known for monumental and conceptual multi-panel works composed of programmatic grids, Jennifer Bartlett negotiates an intersection between precise geometry and lyrical figuration. In the five diptychs on view, she expands her representational painting to engage the structural underpinnings of her natural surroundings. Houses, shorelines and marshes near her home in Amagansett or foliage, flowers and landscaped paths from her Brooklyn garden occupy her canvases. Based on Bartlett's original photographs, her compositions diverge to create a delicate discord within each diptych; the pairs of square panels juxtapose two images of the same scene but with shifting perspective, slight distortions of scale or altered perceptions. In *Rose* (2010-11), the two compositions seem to simply contrast in spatial proximity, though further examination reveals a complex abstraction. As Bartlett describes: "It's a little like a stereopticon, only off-kilter."

Painting with graining brushes, Bartlett builds layer upon layer to weave an expressionistic grid, a dense fabric rich with tactile complexity. Often used for decorative painting, a graining brush's multiple bristles groups are arranged equidistantly so that the painted gesture leaves a trail of parallel lines. Bartlett describes: "The graining brushes can be used horizontally and vertically, and then you have a grid. I begin by applying paint in terms of the image and then block it out by applying these lines. So the grid is built up over and over. I would use a regular small brush to bring something out, then take it down again, and build it up, and take it down and build it up." The effect is an image that teeters between calcification and disintegration, its many layers of nuanced colors rising and retreating on the canvas surface. The stratified grids ensconce the imagery in a soft web, a matrix of air and light. With a *lush sensuality*¹ unprecedented in Bartlett's earlier work, these diptychs reinterpret her signature and foundational process of grid systems.

Born 1941 in Long Beach, California, Jennifer Bartlett studied at Mills College and received her MFA from Yale University in 1965. By the mid-1970s, Bartlett had emerged as a leading American artist of her time. Her first survey exhibition was held in 1985 at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

¹Ottmann, Klaus. *Jennifer Bartlett: History of the Universe—Works 1970–2011*. Exh. cat. Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, NY (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

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and traveled to the Brooklyn Museum, New York and the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Philadelphia, among others. In 2006, the Addison Gallery of American Art surveyed Bartlett's early enameled steel plate paintings in the period from 1968–76. In 2013–14, Klaus Ottmann curated her second traveling survey *Jennifer Bartlett: History of the Universe—Works 1970–2011*, which visited the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Parrish Art Museum, New York. In 2014, the Cleveland Museum of Art united her three monumental plate pieces, *Rhapsody*, *Song*, and *Recitative* in the exhibition *Epic Systems*. Most recently in early 2016, The Drawing Center, New York, exhibited *Jennifer Bartlett: Hospital*, the first museum presentation of this 2012 series. Bartlett's works are represented extensively in collections in the US and abroad including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Naoshima Museum, Naoshima, Japan; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Tate Modern, London; the Whitney Museum of American Art; and the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.

The exhibition will be on view from March 26 through April 23, 2016 at 521 West 21st Street.