

Fergus McCaffrey, New York**Sally Ross*****Materials and Procedures*****January 11 - February 24, 2018****Opening Reception: January 11, 6:00-8:00PM**

Fergus McCaffrey is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Sally Ross, her first with the gallery, as well as the first in the United States since her decisive break with representation in 2012. The eight works on view in *Materials and Procedures*, all dating from the past year, have been cut, collaged, sewn, and pieced together—an “abstraction interrupted.” Map-like and at times suggestive of mosaics, her paintings are improvised and organized in equal measure, retaining traces of the artist’s experimental, chance-driven process. Painting and its history, of which Ross is well aware, is not her subject in the sense of a direct quotation and translation. As with those figures who came before who questioned what else a painting could be, Ross’ expansive sculptural image-object combines tease the confluence of art and life and embrace discovery through accident.



Over the course of the past five years, spent mostly in the studio, not knowing what might occur from one day to another, Ross began to investigate her work's making. Her process arrived, as her paintings do, piece by piece, through addition and subtraction. She intuitively composes on the studio floor with scraps of canvas, pieces of discarded clothing, household material, webbing from chairs, part of a shower curtain—things found on her way to the studio and whatever is at hand. The paintings are loosely stitched with fragments coming together as Ross orchestrates parts into the whole, from side-to-side and top-to-bottom. As she assesses what is necessary to drive the image forward, armatures occasionally find their way into the canvases causing protrusions and prompting sculptural forms.

There is often an element of game-playing for Ross, as when she shot arrows across the length of her studio, striking paint-filled balloons she had attached to canvases, creating random gestural incidents in *One-Shot* and *The Garden Sisters*, both 2017. Here, the French artist Niki de Saint-Phalle, who turned painting into actual target practice in the early 1960s, in a mischievous nod to her friend Jasper Johns, comes to mind. While there may at times be a visual correlation to a Johnsian sensibility in Ross's work—the prismatic cloud of smudged white forms and buoyant tessera that is *Cumulus*, 2017—she may also point to this artist indirectly. Where Johns would attach a broom to a canvas—(his *Fool's House* of 1962)— Ross chose to deny her hand’s representational facility by bundling colored pencils onto the end of a broomstick and drawing in a way no different from the everyday sweeping of a workspace.

Caged Color, 2017, a moody, monumental painting—an unusual totemic format for this artist—rises above a roll of wire mesh stretched along the bottom of the canvas, inside of which Ross has deposited the sticks used to stir the paint in its making. Here, she says, is the evidence, the painting's chronology, each stick tossed in casually, in the order of having been used and disposed of. While the matter-of-fact is key to her approach the element of chance provides pleasure, and Ross surprises us precisely because she first surprised herself, in pursuing a means of painting like the lived experiment it once was.



In *The Garden Sisters*, 2017, the largest work on view, the eye travels across its ever-shifting and abundant surface, with incidents directing and re-directing our vision as it fragments and coalesces simultaneously. Amidst the array of materials—canvas, spray paint, printing ink, oil, enamel, paper, resin, printed cotton cloth, jute webbing, polyester thread—it is Ross' archery that moves this work in multiple directions across time; a Rauschenberg Combine re-collaged by Kurt Schwitters, while invoking *Gutai* and *Arte Povera*. In all this, Ross attenuates the artwork's existence between becoming and finitude, allowing its temporality to remain alive.

Having gone beyond the rendering of familiar objects in recognizable space to embrace material realism, Ross has animated and complicated the picture plane as a site of buoyantly interlaced compositions. Her paintings remind us that in art, encounters with the world are inevitably enfolded within the experience of inventing and re-inventing the work itself.

Sally Ross, born 1965 in Morristown, New Jersey, lives and works in New York. In March, she will present a one-person exhibition at the Collezione Maramotti in Reggio Emilia, Italy, accompanied by a catalog with a text by Mario Diacono, and an interview with Bob Nickas. Previously her work has been shown at Galerie Minmin in Tokyo (2008), Mario Diacono, Boston (2007), and at Massimo Audiello Gallery, New York (1998 and 2000). Recently, she was included in *Works of the Jenney Archive* at Gagosian Gallery, New York (2013).

ABOUT FERGUS McCaffrey

Founded in 2006, Fergus McCaffrey is internationally recognized for its groundbreaking role in promoting the work of postwar Japanese artists such as Sadamasa Motonaga, Natsuyuki Nakanishi, Kazuo Shiraga, and Jiro Takamatsu. The gallery also exhibits the work of emerging and seminal Western artists such as Jack Early, Marcia Hafif, Birgit Jürgenssen, Richard Nonas, Sigmar Polke, and Carol Rama.

In keeping with the gallery's commitment to Japanese art and culture, we are pleased to announce that Fergus McCaffrey will open its Tokyo outpost in March 2018 with an exhibition of paintings by Robert Ryman.

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Stay connected with the gallery via Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter with the hashtags #SallyRoss and #FergusMcCaffrey

Images

1. *Caged Color*, 2017 Gesso, matte medium and enamel paint on canvas and printed cotton fabric, with polyester thread, wood and chicken wire, 108 x 78 x 2 1/2 inches (274.3 x 198.1 x 6.4 cm)
2. *The Garden Sisters*, 2017 Gesso, matte medium, spray paint, printing ink, oil, enamel, paper and resin on canvas and printed cotton cloth, with jute webbing and polyester thread, 156 1/4 x 81 x 2 inches (396.9 x 205.7 x 5.1 cm)