

# SURFACE IS ONLY A MATERIAL VEHICLE FOR SPIRIT

KATIE BELL  
PAMELA COUNCIL  
ALEXANDRE DIOP  
GRACELEE LAWRENCE  
CHARLES MASON III  
MONICA REZMAN  
JESSICA STOLLER  
CHIFFON THOMAS

**GUEST CURATED BY KENNEDY YANKO**

September 25 – December 18, 2021  
Opening Reception September 25, 2021, 5 – 8 pm  
219 N. Elizabeth St.

Kavi Gupta presents *Surface is Only a Material Vehicle for Spirit*, a group exhibition spotlighting the work of eight dynamic voices within the field of contemporary abstraction, guest curated by artist Kennedy Yanko.

Is there a metaphysical side to materiality? Sculptor Kennedy Yanko's curatorial debut with Kavi Gupta explores the complex perceptual relationships that exist between the surface realities of aesthetic phenomena, and the illusions and transcendental insights experienced by artists and viewers of the work.

"What is the disconnect between our innate knowingness and our optic interpretations of the world around us?" Yanko asks. "I am presented with something seemingly concrete in front of me only to find it is soft and supple. What happens inside me as my brain tries to understand and recalibrate itself? That dissonance is the conduit to a greater understanding—the disruption to our seeming truth that evokes consciousness."

Inspired by the writings of abstract artist Jack Whitten (1939 – 2018), the title of this exhibition spotlights the complications that arise when when we try distinguishing what is superficial from the truths that lie beyond first impressions.

Whitten considered his paintings to be structured manifestations of his feelings—maps of his soul. While each artist in this exhibition mobilizes a unique visual strategy in their work, each also offers a distinctively personal elucidation of Whitten's belief that artists are experts at using material realities to convey the unseen depths of spirit.

*Surface is Only a Material Vehicle for Spirit* features a new, site-specific installation by Katie Bell and works by Pamela Council, Alexandre Diop, Gracelee Lawrence, Charles Mason III, Monica Rezman, Jessica Stoller, and Chiffon Thomas.



Pamela Council, *Relief 15*, 2019, Silicone tiles on wood panel with metal frame, 18 x 18 inches

*Curatorial statement on Surface is Only a Material Vehicle for Spirit, a title paraphrased from the writings of artist Jack Whitten*

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Artists working in abstraction challenge perception through their alchemic interpretations of materiality. With our increased access to information about the interconnectedness of science, consciousness, and the body, artists are able to unveil materiality as a tool for destroying the boundary between illusions and reality, and challenge themselves and viewers on their interior behavior and responses.

Building on Surrealist sensibilities and the formal visual language created by the Abstract Expressionists, contemporary abstract artists are putting intimate and personal curiosities at the forefront of their work, transmuted self-consciousness, wonder, fear, and all existential concerns into their surfaces.

They are incorporating the soma, our stories, and our purpose in work, creating opportunities for expansion—conceptually and physically.

The artists in this exhibition make work that dissolves the cultural resistance to discussing spirituality, science, and metaphysics, all in tandem, as opposed to discrete parts. Not only does this way of working challenge how we see and understand the world, it pushes us to revisit how we perceive our cemented ideas. Confusion is meant to catalyze deeper inquiry.

—Kennedy Yanko, 2021