

Josh SPERLING

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*Josh Sperling*

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*Untitled (detail)*, 2019. Acrylic on canvas. 307.3307.3 cm. Photo: Claire Dorn. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

Perrotin

**How** would one **describe** Josh **S**perling's work? Is it painting or sculpture, or is it both? **Born** in New York, Josh **S**perling creates **vibrant shapes** of squiggles by stretching canvas over carved **plywood** and painting the **desired** shade above. **By** doing so, he breaks the **line** of two and three-dimensionality, image, and object. **PLUS** talks to **S**perling about his **unique** visual palette and how the **buoyant** compositional movements find their way to **balance**.



Installation view of Josh Sperling's *Spectrum* at Perrotin Hong Kong, 2021.  
Photo: Farzad Owrang. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

**PLUS** Where did your Googie and Memphis style come from over the years?

**JOSH SPERLING** It comes from my exposure to it from a young age. I grew up in the late '80s and '90s, and Memphis style had been co-opted into popular culture. Everything from the MTV logo, Saved By The Bell intro, and numerous other advertisements were Memphis rip-offs and seeped into my brain. Also, I am drawn to geometry, which naturally led to the arrangement of various shapes and colors.

**P** Can you walk me through how the shape of the bullseye has transitioned into 'composites,' which contain more form and geometry?

**JS** The bullseye shape was the first shape I made. I chose a shape I considered 'simple' because then I didn't have a deep understanding of how materials form together. As I learned more about the process and developed my techniques, it allowed more possibilities. Since then, I now can wrap my head with maximal compositions that require more mastery of the process.

**P** Allowing spaces to fill up with different shapes and forms with vibrant colors and textures lets me think about ways to be within the area I am visualizing. It gives the feeling of joy and happiness—providing a sense of 'play.' Letting myself enjoy the work without questioning anything, which we tend to forget when becoming adults.

**JS** I enjoy the playful aspect of the work, especially the last few years, and if I'm going to choose the way I spend my time, I'm going to choose to make happy things. I am an optimist, and I think my work expresses that!

**P** Seeing shapes balancing on top (or next to each other) reminds me of the process of putting puzzle pieces together. From which point does this

particular shape go next to another, and which colors are being partnered together?

**JS** That part of the process is kind of a collage but just done on the computer instead of with scissors. Shapes are picked and placed next to each other at various angles and scales until all of a sudden it looks good. It's all just trial and error every time. I have realized some formulas that work and use them repeatedly, but then my curiosity calls, and I want to try something new and go back to trial and error.



**P** Texture is also something I find very intriguing. The textured surfaces on the composites shift different perspectives of infinite possibilities of what forms, shapes, colors, texture, layers it can take next. Can you talk about the decision process and unify these different textures?

**JS** The different textures and paints are an aid to contrast all the various shapes within the composition. I also just love the material, whether paint canvas or linen and each material's inherent properties and beauty. It's fun to challenge yourself continually with new

materials and techniques. Now I have many methods that I have worked on, so why not combine them and see what happens.

**P** Interestingly enough, every wall composition reminds me of organic matter and brings a new perspective of painting or sculpture.

**JS** That's a great point! I consider my wall pieces paintings, but the process is nothing like painting; it is more akin to sculpture. My work sits right between painting and sculpture, and that's because I have combined the two things I am fond of: buildings and the materials of painting.

**P** The way your work squiggles is very rhythmical, as if I am looking at a piece of music. In that way, you are providing both visual and auditory experiences.

**JS** You are correct in ways that the compositions bounce along. They have rhythm, balance, and repetition, just like music. Moreso, when the overall arrangements are long rectangles, it gives a sense of [music] notes.

**P** Through your oeuvre, you redefine the monochromatic and find a balance in unbalanced objects—unbalance of shapes, forms, and colors that eventually see their way to balance.

**JS** I am always fascinated by the three-dimensionality of monochromatic works. It creates shadows, unlike the vibrant colors, providing a wide range of perceptual colors. It still is monochrome, but the shadows and highlights turn it into something further from what it originally was. I always strive to find that sweet spot where the work is overall balanced, but its parts interact in an unbalanced way. That's what I find truly fascinating.





*Follow the Leader B*, 2020. Acrylic on canvas, acrylic on panel, hammered enamel on panel. 83.8×77.5 cm Photo: Farzad Owrang. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



*Fried Paradise*, 2020. Acrylic on canvas, acrylic on panel, hammered enamel on panel. 149.9×320 cm Photo: Farzad Owrang. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



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Installation view of Josh Sperling’s *So It Goes* at Perrotin Paris, 2019.  
Photo: Claire Dorn. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Plus Connect

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