



CULTURE

Studio Visit: Photographer Jill Greenberg

Inside the workspace of the
celebrated artist, whose
upcoming gallery showcase
blurs painting and photography

by David Graver
on 09 February 2015

On the fifth floor of a joint residential/workspace building in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood, photographer [Jill Greenberg](#) set up shop back in 1997. While she would leave in 2000 for the West Coast, 12 years later she returned and the studio itself has had a resounding impact on her latest gallery show "[Paintings](#)." We've been following Greenberg [for years now](#), but this latest crop of calculated and chaotic works delivers a new dimension to her already stunning array of accomplishments.



The large-scale works are photographs taken of Greenberg's own experimental paintings atop glass, featuring light reflected in wet paint smears and globs, as well as images cast through stencils. There's very little post-production and these are not composites—rather, pigment and light are being photographed. "I am trying to comment on the war between painting and photography," Greenberg shares with CH. "Clearly there is one. Photography continues to be really disrespected, even as a result of there being so many photographers. It becomes more questionable; the value of a photograph and the skills needed to make a photograph. Anyone can take a picture with an SLR and press a 'Photoshop filter.' My filter is my brain. It's me." And yet, with all the gravity in tow, they're also very fun pictures.



"I knew I wanted to do something really different after my pictures of animals and my pictures of babies. I had been playing with photographing paint, even in 2011, and I couldn't figure it out. I have been thinking about putting paint on my images and that didn't really work. Basically, here in New York, I was trying some different kinds of light and I ended up shooting some wet paint in daylight under my skylights," she continues. The natural light cast new perspective on her work, and blending that with light from stencils affixed to strobes, she struck the visual note she had been seeking. "In a way, it's site-specific. It wouldn't have happened if I didn't move back. I wouldn't have had this sort of fractal reflection."



Greenberg's well-lit studio, bolstered by the skylights above, offers a myriad of locations for creating and analyzing works. Subtle stars and lightning bolts factor into Greenberg's work, by way of her light-stenciling. She says, "A lot of this is tonal experimentation. I end up seeing what's working and not working. I'm just having fun with the combination of the lines of paint and the lines of light, and having them intermingle in a way I haven't really seen before."



Greenberg's studio is also filled with the technical components one would find in a photography studio. A large poster-printer sits at one wall, cameras all over the place, alongside laptops and desktops. And, in an ideal world, technology would factor into her exhibitions: "I would love to be able to show them this big on a screen," she shares, pointing to one of her large printouts. "I don't think the technology is there yet, but I can see down the line people selling on an LCD screen. I saw people can do it on something like 20 x 24 inches, but that's not big enough for me."

Greenberg even patented the process behind her creations. "People call it stupid, but given the history of people copying my work, I patented it. The thing is, I definitely dealt with a ridiculous number of imitators with my crying baby lighting. Thankfully, it's actually credited to me and called 'Jill Greenberg' lighting. That's cool, and not cool. Then the problem becomes people think I only do that—and that was 10 years ago. I didn't only do that even when I was doing that." This forthcoming show is the creative output of Greenberg's reaction to rampant appropriation. The artist is selling all the works in the exhibition as as one-off unique images. There will be no additional prints, and this is intrinsically linked to its inception as a painting first.



The essence of Greenberg's latest work happens to be turning the tables. "This is photography of paintings instead of paintings of photography, which has been a tradition forever," she concludes. The work is truly inspired. The steps involved are thoughtful, elaborate and directly impacted by her space. Jokingly, Greenberg mentions that there are a few artists who describe themselves as "painters of light" and that she is a "lighter of paint." She very much is; going so far as to let the skylights have their say.

View Greenberg's latest works in "Paintings" at [Clampart](#), beginning 19 February 2015 and running through 28 March 2015.

Images by David Graver