

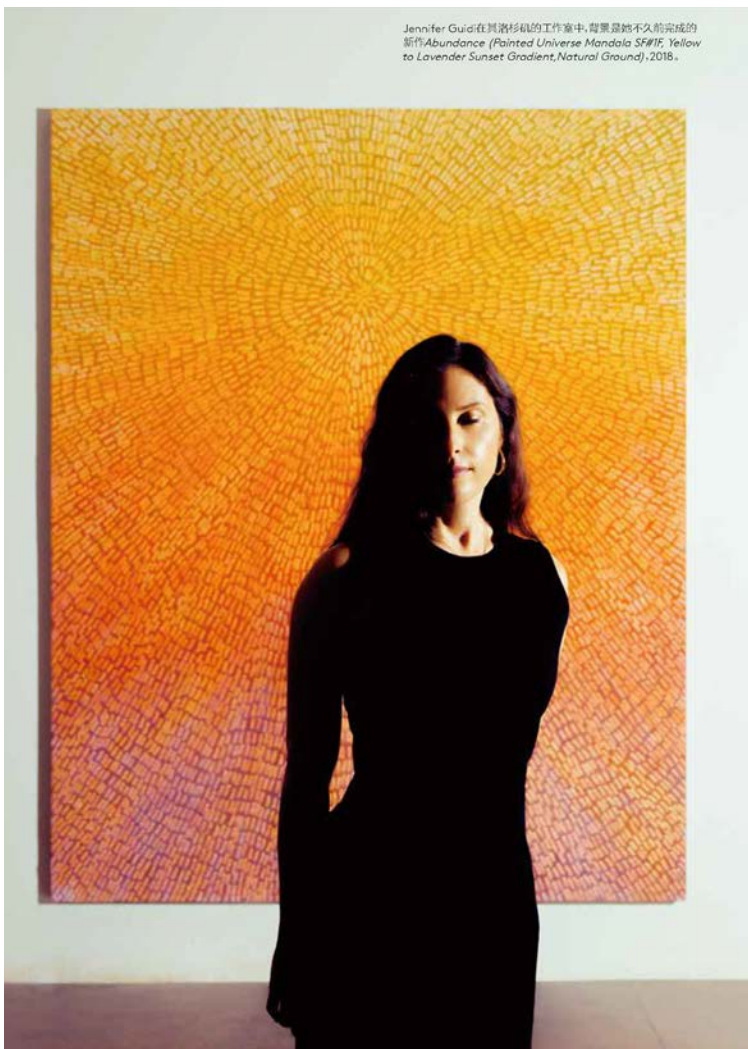
ART 品位艺术

UNIVERSE OF SANDS

This March, Gagosian opened Jennifer Guidi's first solo exhibition in Asia. The artist, aka the "IT girl" in American art circles, will also have the world premiere of her new body of triangular-shaped canvases during the Hong Kong art season. After nearly two decades of creative experiments with paint and sand, Guidi's art has gradually turned into an introspective spiritual journey, while the artist herself has also evolved from a quiet girl hailing from a desert city to a top-rated artist much sought after by the world's rich and famous. With craftsman-like dedication and the grace of an urban sophisticate, Guidi has created a spiritual universe that often stares us right in the face.

Being an LA artist, Jennifer Guidi is often billed as "the rising West Coast painter", a label that has somehow stuck. But unlike other "rising artists" such as Oscar Murillo and Guan Xiao, who were born in the 80s, Jennifer was born in 1972 in Redondo Beach on the coast of California, and grew up in Palm Desert. The style of her works is unmistakably Californian, boasting a palette and texture informed by her personal experience – an adolescence spent moving around with her family from the East Coast to California, followed by a relocation from Manhattan Beach to Orange County before settling in the quiet city of Palm Desert. Her mother was enamored with Van Gogh's prints, while her father was an art and fashion aficionado working at a typical country club, whose influence led to a series of artistic encounters that sparked little Guidi's interest in painting.

Guidi spent much of her youth living in a bubble, leading an introverted existence by painting in a meditative state often for days on end. Surrounded by a vast expanse of desert and its gigantic tropical flora, the city of Palm Desert is reminiscent of the time-forsaken human ruins in *Blade Runner 2049*. Its eerie blend of man-made spectacle and nature was etched on young Guidi's memory clouds. "The desolate desert landscape was so awe-inspiring that it has stuck with me ever since," said Guidi. Aged 46, the artist seems to have developed a taste for "landscape", repeatedly referring to the desert from her childhood memory, Moroccan sunsets, mountains in LA and Chicago sunrises, all of which are inspirations for her. For decades, she has consistently deconstructed "landscape" in her works, recreating with her painstakingly repetitive strokes some two-dimensional man-made spectacle similar to those in her hometown, a city built in the midst of a desert. Gifted with exceptionally finely-tuned and tenacious artistic antennae, Guidi is forever intrigued by the subtle differences of the cities she has set foot in, never letting a grain of sand or grit slip through her fingers; and sand and grit indeed



Jennifer Guidi在其洛杉矶的工作室中，背景是她不久前完成的新作*Abundance (Painted Universe Mandala SF#16, Yellow to Lavender Sunset Gradient, Natural Ground)*, 2018。

have become an important part of her practice. Ever since her visit to Kauai Island in Hawaii, she has developed a profound and enduring interest in sand, one of the most ancient materials on this planet. She is particularly drawn to the physicality and peculiar texture of sand, and from her prolonged experiments of mixing sand and acrylic paint has emerged a material that is uniquely her own, and with which she can finally transpose nature to a two-dimensional space with grace and ease, creating a vast spiritual universe with a tiny physical substance.

The Elegance of Technique

A trip to Morocco in 2012 led to the discovery of a methodology for Guidi's own creative materials. The special weaving technique in Moroccan tapestries involves a rigor that is often seen in meticulously detailed paintings. Each work requires the artisan to start weaving from the top left corner and thence to work his way from left to right, row by row, until the entire work is done. This approach has about it a quality of penance that Guidi finds deeply fascinating, and following prolonged observation, she began to apply that

method to her own practice. Leaving behind the "uncertainty" associated with painting, she turned art creation into a self-imposed religious practice. After experimenting with still life, plants and spiders, Guidi found what really fascinated her in her own colorful spider paintings: dots.

This realization set her on a path of more in-depth and dedicated research into dots. In her second solo show at the LA gallery ACME, Guidi created a unified aesthetic scheme of colors, using unmixed colors for backdrops and plants. With this unified system of colors and materials in place, her own style gradually took shape, i.e. she took a "purist" approach to portraying deconstructed "nature" in her mind. Indeed, a corner of her LA studio - with its tins of unmixed colors identified by writing in black on white labels, as well as painting paraphernalia and paints stored in clear plastic containers and categorized by hue - testifies to the "Mono-ha" spirit of the artist. Compared with a typical painter's studio, Guidi's bears more resemblance to a systematically organized lab, with works individually stored in immaculately-placed, equally-distanced minimalist white boxes, a work space that also calls to mind the exhibition space of a gallery. Due to the peculiarity of sand as a material, Guidi prefers to work by laying her "canvas" flat on a table, making the entire process even more like that of a craftsman. Unlike the pointillist approach popularized by Seurat or Signac, Guidi is not after the heterogeneity

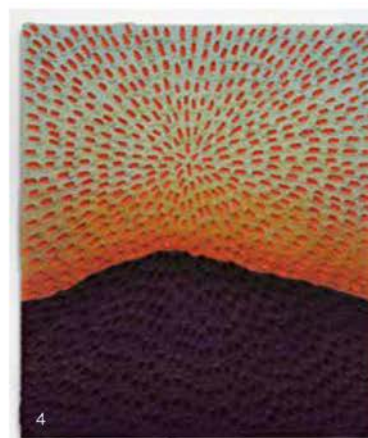
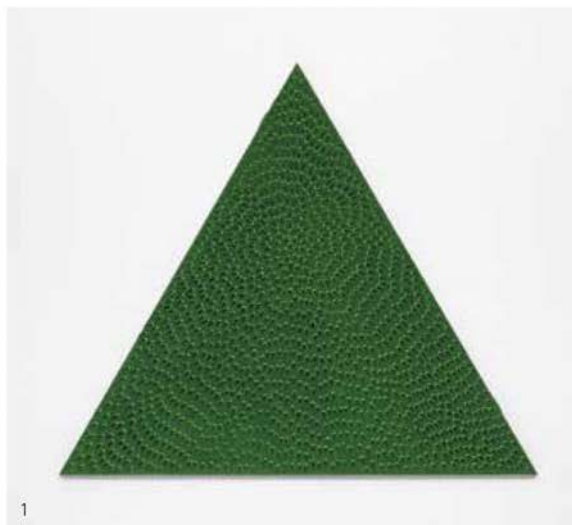
of strokes; so instead of standing out jarringly in her works, her "painting" technique conveys remarkable composure. Day in and day out, her painstakingly methodical effort results in glimpses of nature made up of colors and light.

Since settling in LA in 2001, Guidi has been using her camera to document details of landscapes, which are juxtaposed with the texture of the tapestries in her mind's eye. But as to how to visualize them on canvas, Guidi has developed her own methodology. "I began with red, which served as an underpainting, on which I reconstructed bit by bit those tapestry patterns from memory, using a mixture of mustard yellow and natural sand. Then I waited to see how that turned out..." explained Guidi. "Later I tried to mix sand of two different colors, which I didn't think would work; but as it turned out, the sand and colors seemed to acquire a life of their own, and the chemistry between them was better than expected. Like a wild purple flower suddenly coming into view, the brilliance of nature always comes and goes unannounced." Thanks to her practice in meditation, Guidi has learned to merge art with her meditation experience, which is like a laying down of colored sand by Tibetan monks to create stunningly beautiful religious images, the act itself being a form of spiritual practice. Painting has played a crucial role in Guidi's life, so much so that it is closely intertwined with all her joys and sorrows. "Whenever I've got time, I will go and see works by Georgia O'Keeffe or Agnes Martin. I love looking at paintings, and their materials and souls speak to me all the time. There is nothing else I enjoy more than painting," said Guidi.

Love of Life

At the age of 46, Guidi lives a life that is every bit as rigorous and structured as her paintings: working nine to five, Monday through Friday at her studio, with weekends set aside for family and children. She often takes her adorable twin daughters to view her works at the studio. "My kids really enjoy painting and seeing my works, and their critiques often hit the nail on the head, probably because children are by nature more sensitive to abstract stuff than grown-ups," she said.

On Instagram, Guidi appears to relish sharing details about her life and creative activity, and this constant



1-2. Jennifer Guidi, *The Priestess* (*Green and Light Green MT, Green Sand SF #1T, Green Ground*), 2018及该作品细节图,是艺术家首次运用三角形构图。

3-4. Jennifer Guidi, *Worlds In Motion* (*Painted Light Blue Sand SF #1C, Blue-Orange Sky, Purple-Brown Mountain*), 2018 及该作品细节图。

5. Jennifer Guidi, *Force of Instinct* (*Painted Universe Mandala SF #1G, Sunset Sky, Black-Purple Mountains, Natural Ground*), 2018

展览: Jennifer Guidi:

曰心说

展期: 3月26日-5月12日

地点: 高古轩画廊, 香港中环毕打街12号毕打行7楼





Jennifer Guidi在她的新作品前
Standing In Center (White #1 PT, Black Sand SF #1E, Black Ground), 2018

stream of cyber-sharing contrasts starkly with the composure shining through in her works and her discreet attitude towards the media. She rarely speaks about her personal life, mentioning her family and daughters only in passing, even though she belongs to a prestigious, well-known family. Her husband Mark Grotjahn, an eminent artist in his own right, is also represented by Gagosian. Yet this veritable “golden couple” of the art world choose to post only self-filtered images on their social media platforms. While there is no way to tell for sure, one can attempt an explanation by referring to snippets of information and Guidi’s creative journey.

Perhaps the answer simply lies in the triangular canvases premiered in her recent solo show: stable yet pointed, the triangles, as mystic symbols, have been masterfully hidden behind time; together, sand and colors convey a sense of calmness with their even tempo; strokes are smoothed out the minute they are done; and the colors and patterns of the sand, despite their ephemeral nature, afford us a glimpse into a universe that stretches into eternity. And this glimpse of eternity has kept Guidi hooked, making her long to capture the feeling as she experiences it. The results are Guidi’s “mind maps” on canvas, much like the colorful, formal mandala in Buddhist tantric art.

Gazing at Guidi’s works, one can easily be drawn into a state of peace and serenity by her soothing and vibrant colors, and this in turn has much to do with the state Guidi was in when painting them. “I have a feeling that I’ve promised to document with my works, and I have promised my former self to speak out, and the resulting sense of urgency has left me in a state of constant regret. But it has also prompted my inner self to confront my works, urging me to accurately depict my inner thoughts every second of my life and not to obsess about the external world.” The pointillist approach undoubtedly plays a big part in Guidi’s life, and the use of sand as “dots” in her painting has officially launched her into a realm of nothingness. Combined with her meditation and mindfulness exercise, sand paintings have enabled Guidi to view painting as something subjective rather than objective, a process that is breathtakingly tantalizing each step along the way, and may be likened to rending and tearing in the depths of Guidi’s soul and the warm stream trickling out of the cracks.

Guidi’s solo show at Gagosian Hong Kong is entitled *Heliocentric*, which, according to the artist, underlines the fact that each work has a focal point that serves as the “sun” or a source of energy. As the artist put it, “Triangles are powerful shapes, generating non-stop motion and guiding our gaze vertically upward, very much like “centering” your soul during meditation to keep your spiritual light on. Meanwhile, the center point of the painting also engenders a visual dynamic, or an optical illusion, that radiates outward.” A quintessential American artist, Guidi testifies to the longstanding tradition of marrying qualities: modern with puritan, spiritual with material, and restive with reticent; it is like seeing a jaguar popping out of nowhere in a neon-lit motel on a summer night — all is utterly surreal yet curiously familiar.