

## **POLLY APFELBAUM**

Color Sessions, London, Fall 2014

The Color Sessions are monochrome fabric works. When I was in Rome at the American Academy I originally thought I would look at Cosmati floors; instead I became fascinated by drapery and the colors of fabrics in Renaissance and Baroque painting. In Rome I was juggling a lot of new information in relationship to my own history; this work came late in my time in Rome, after all the new/old references had a chance to settle in. They started out as a constantly changing studio installation—the large squares of loosely draped fabric punctuated by the hanging beads. They have an improvisational quality, something like a musician improvising on a theme. Hence: “Color Sessions.”

Partly because of this history, they work in the in-between space of public/private. I was thinking about the movement and order of thought, of color and light, the angel’s wings in the Fra Angelico paintings in Saint Marco, Renaissance and Baroque drapery, the way that curtains conceal and reveal. My work is spatial but always related to painting. The Color Sessions can be read as monochrome paintings, but they are fragile monochromes - paintings that are falling off the wall. I recently discovered that the sheen of the fabric is the result of weaving threads of two colors together in a very tight weave - it makes it difficult to locate the surface or pin down the color. So even the ‘monochrome’ is actually two colors. The beads bring another spatiality into play, moving farther off the wall, into the space of the gallery. The time spent in Rome allowed me to condense and slow down all those references.

There is another aspect that has been consistent in my work which is that fabric can never be totally controlled and is never the same. In every installation I respond to the architecture of the space, keeping certain essential things consistent but introducing variations and change over time. So these are Color “Sessions” in the sense of musicians getting together for a number of takes, going through the score again and again, not toward some definitive version, but each take being as important as the other. This is the way my work has functioned for a long time: it has a provisional quality; it’s not about definitive forms or situations. It’s also a response to the world as it is today. I think we could use a little less certainty and a little more doubt as we look at a world that gets harder and harder to know every day. The work always takes on new meaning in a new context.

Some work is fast and some work is slow, in the making and in contemplating. I like the idea that the fast is slow and the slow can be fast, mixing up notions of time. Like a musician who has to practice for decades to get to the place where it’s possible to improvise effortlessly, the Color Sessions are very direct in the making but they have a long slow history.