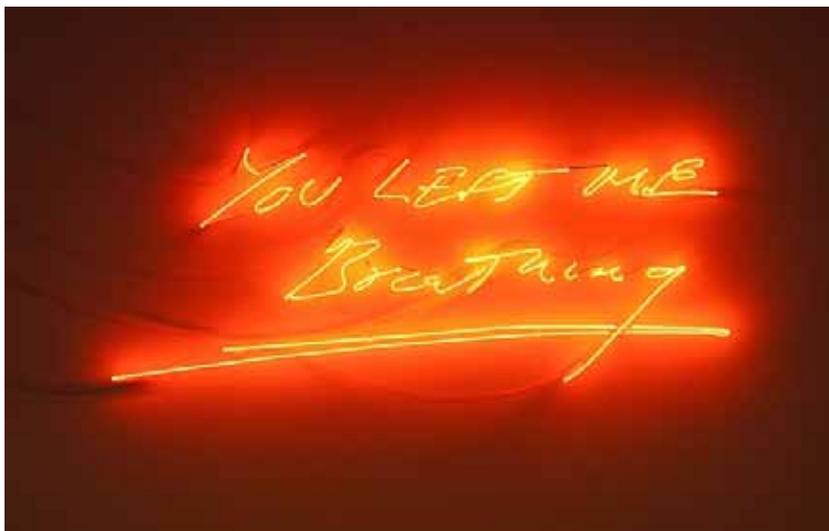


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Tracey Emin, *You Left Me Breathing*, courtesy Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills

Tracy Emin ***You Left Me Breathing*** **Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills**

Words by Jeremy von Stilb, Whitehot LA

The hand drawn line, a scribble, a note written carelessly on a piece of paper. Such displays are rarely given any consideration beyond the purpose of their function. A grocery list, a quick measurement, a way to pass the time. It is this very gesture that is given great attention in the latest show at the Gagosian Gallery in Beverly Hills, California. This is Tracey Emin's *You Left Me Breathing*; a show featuring works in various mediums that focus on the artist's urgent and intimate actions.

Unlike many artists of late, Tracey Emin looks no further than her own emotional landscapes to provide the viewer with access to many autobiographical moments detailing her joys and failures. It is a small privilege to be able to view her work outside of her native England. It benefits her in that the reputation she has in Britain means little on America shores as she is known for emotional breakdowns on television interviews, public drunkenness, well published spats with other artists and other forms of bad girl behavior typically reserved for a rock star rather than one of the country's most notable contemporary artists. Without any knowledge of the coverage of her in various tabloids, one is able to view her work and encounter the emotional vulnerability and confrontational self-expression that has always been present in her art. For her Los Angeles exhibition, Emin shows a large number of art works, including paintings, sculptures, neon and her signature sewn pieces. All of her works are rendered in a nervous series of gestures, whether it is 2-D, 3-D or light, the emphasis lies in her handiwork.



Installation View, Tracey Emin *You Left Me Breathing*, courtesy Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills

When entering the gallery one immediately notices the large neon sculpture that dominates the entire height of the gallery. It is a drawing of a flower, which has been reproduced with a complex system of neon tubing. On the other walls hang several canvases which feature two color fields and then hastily painted over with a number of muted colors. These works surround several sculptures that look like gatherings of white branches that reach up almost ten feet. All of these pieces are different renderings of her drawn images. The paintings are the obvious and most immediate manifestations of this as she is directly applying paint to the canvas. The works seem like direct representations of her inner turmoil, created in the height of her emotions. The neon and bronze works though are more considered given the lengthy process needed to create them. Instead they seem to freeze and re-contextualize her more immediate abilities of quickly rendering images. A quick sketch that might have taken only a minute to draw up is then reinterpreted into a giant neon work. The bending, illuminated glass is incredibly complex, but in depicting Emin's personal imagery of a flower it seems like an effortless construction. The same goes for the bronze sculptures, which bring dimensionality to her quavering scrawls, as if what started as simple scratches on a tiny piece of paper are then magnified and given weight properly displaying the emotion that originally inspired their inception.



Installation View, Tracey Emin *You Left Me Breathing*, courtesy Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills

In other rooms, Emin's needlework is on display. From a distance they look just like doodles one would find on a cocktail napkin. On close inspection it becomes obvious that they are in fact images that are hand sewn into white fabric. Many involve self-portraits of sprawled body parts, which also feature brief snippets of her poetry and personal thoughts. One of the most striking is *Harder and Better*, which measures 50 x 52 inches, a needlework image of her legs, stomach and genitals, with the personal message "Harder and better than all of you fuckers". The large size of the piece betrays the personal intimacy of the imagery and thought. What appears to have been made quickly and sloppily out of a moment of frustration is suddenly grander given the detail of the stitching. It pulls the viewer in opposing

directions by being confronted with something so intimate and immediate yet detailed and labor intensive at once.

This aesthetic applies to much of her work in general. Whether its painting, sculpture, drawing or needlework, Emin never loses the ability to depict her own gestural figurations. If the piece is physically made by her own hand or not, all of her art retains the loose, sometimes sloppy, occasionally malignant but always beautiful essence of handiwork. From her towering sculptures to the tiniest of her drawings, the concentration of her exposed self always looms large over the viewer. There is a gash in Tracey Emin's heart, but that is the one thing she refuses to sew back together, as it's the only way she can let us peer into her soul.



Jeremy von Stilb, born and raised in Tucson Arizona, moved out to California five years ago in search for Hollywood dreams. Instead he found art, and here we are now.

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about whitehot