

## GAGOSIAN

# SURFACE

### How Jennifer Guidi Finds Energy in Color

*Before the coronavirus shuttered Gagosian gallery in New York, the Angeleno artist unleashed a trove of transcendent paintings that harnesses the healing qualities of color.*

Ryan Waddoups

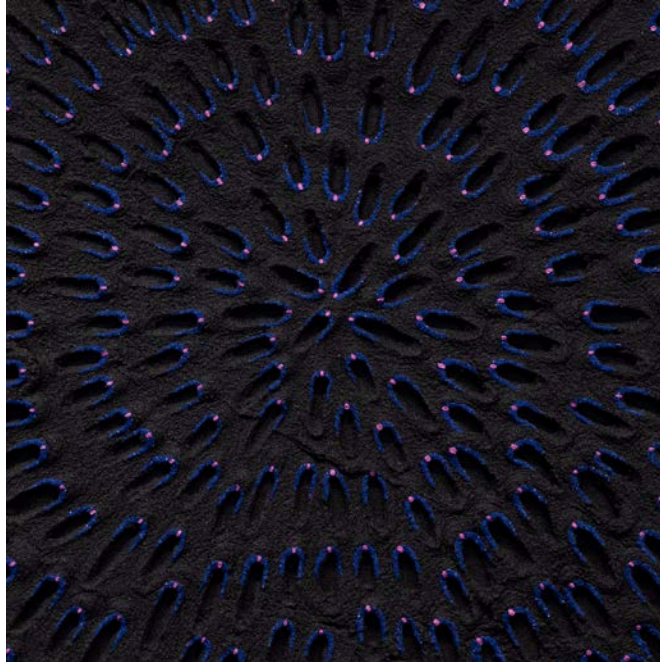


*Jennifer Guidi in her Los Angeles studio. Photography by Brica Wilcox, courtesy Gagosian.*

“I consider myself a colorist—it’s always on my mind when making a piece,” says Jennifer Guidi of her radiant (and highly coveted) paintings that evoke mystical dreamscapes. Though her works may appear monochromatic from far away, the Los Angeles-based artist ascribes a soft power to the subtle textural and chromatic shifts achieved by the mandala-like patterns that ripple from a central point on her canvases. (It’s often slightly left-of-center and elevated, in line with the human heart.) Up close, her paintings pulse, sparking a metaphysical reverie that’s both dizzying and calming. “I think about color as energy,” she says. “How does it affect us emotionally, and how does it uplift us?”

These questions inform “Gemini,” a solo exhibition of her works that displayed at Gagosian New York before the novel coronavirus caused the gallery to close. In “Gemini,” she puts the restorative power and inherent dualities of color on full display by illustrating the cosmic and earthly forces that find harmony in her work. (Gemini is also her astrological sign; ditto for her

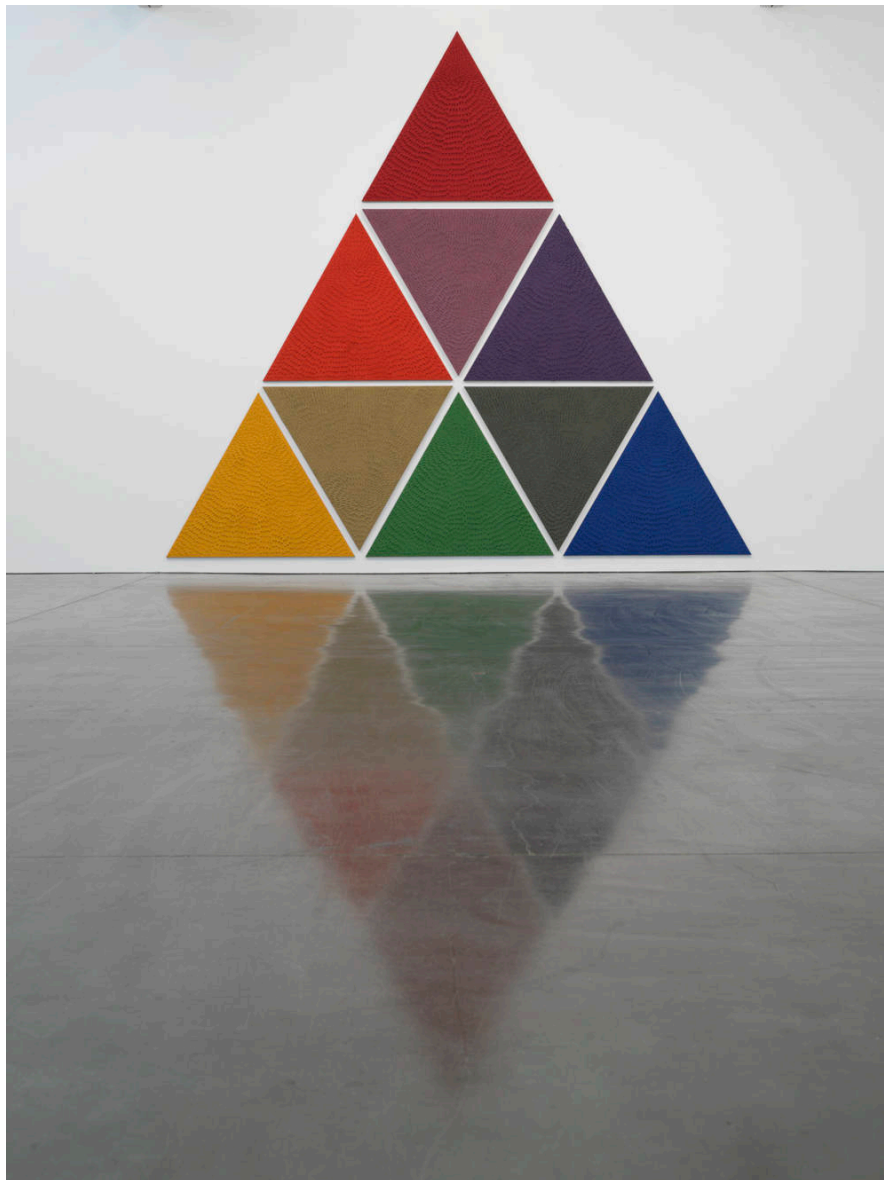
11-year-old twins.) One painting, called *My Thoughts Emerge from a Mingling of Light and Darkness*, forms part of a series that arrays seven enormous canvases that appear pitch-black from afar, but are brightly underpainted with a single color. The effect is nearly imperceptible until viewed up close and, much like a constellation, easy to miss if you're not looking hard enough.



*Detail of My Thoughts Emerge from a Mingling of Light and Darkness (Crown) (2019) by Jennifer Guidi. Photography by Brica Wilcox, courtesy Gagolian.*

Guidi, who studied painting at Boston University and the Art Institute of Chicago, has mastered her signature technique of blending pigment, sand, and acrylic polymers, applying the mixture to canvas, and gouging its wet surface with wooden dowels to make hundreds of small indentations in repetitive circular patterns. After she applies oil paint or a small chunk of hardened sand in a U-shape onto the gouge marks, each one “achieves just enough of a visual contrast that it activates movement,” she says. “No two are alike—each has a life of its own.”

In Guidi’s paintings, the forest and the trees carry equal weight. The colors she uses in *My Thoughts Emerge from a Mingling of Light and Darkness* corresponds not only to those found in Newton’s rainbow, but to the chakras—a Hindu system of circular energy centers in the body that inspire her artistic and meditative practices. *Intuitively Guided*, a series of chakra-inspired diptychs, could easily pass as a new-age take on color theory illustration. “If something is red, I’ve learned how that certain color can affect us if we’re surrounded by it all day,” she says.



An Essential Order (Goethe) (2019) by Jennifer Guidi. Photography by Rob McKeever, courtesy Gagolian.

It's no surprise that Guidi, who spent the majority of 2019 creating these works (she admits they're "fairly time-consuming"), also rigorously studied two influential color theorists in preparation. She found herself drawn to German literary titan Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who "felt like it was the artist's job to consider how different colors affect the viewer, whether happiness or melancholy"—a phenomenon she explores by blending hues in *An Essential Order (Goethe)* (2019). The intrepid 18th-century Austrian naturalist Ignaz Schiffermüller, who pined for a nomenclature to describe the countless colors in nature, comes to light in *Your Colors Are Eternal (Schiffermüller)* (2019), a recreation of his 1772 color wheel.

Each work in "Gemini" reminds Guidi how the California sunlight filters into her studio. It's easy to imagine a cavernous, sun-drenched space during golden hour—that transitional state right before sunset during which daylight is softer and redder, and the colors can feel perfect. The effect instills a sense of calm, much like seeing one of her compositions up-close for the first time. "Colors charge us both externally and internally," she says. "On an intuitive level, I'm guided by the colors in nature."

