

LAURENT DELAYE

Jessica Voorsanger

The New York Blackout Tapestries

11 February – 13 March 2022

Private view on Friday 18 February, 6-8pm

With a performance at 7pm

Followed in the evening by the **Apathy Band** next door at **Eats 'n' Beats**

Since arriving from New York in London in the early 90s as a young art student, Jessica Voorsanger has focussed her work on popular culture, with a particular fondness for the phenomenon of fan adoration. She observed this 'unconditional love' from all angles, creating exhibitions that were participative events, immersive experiences incorporating live performance, painting, sculpture, video, cabaret, band, installation, and fashion. A true multi-media artist, her many shows involved numerous performers (visitors included) bound together by the wit and humour of the artist. Sometimes it would include dressing up, impersonation, makeshift make-up tents and street performance as part of the material. However crazy the events she put together could be, they were always created as compositions from the viewpoint of a painter about colours, forms, volumes, lines, and rhythms.

As the work kept evolving it became less about the celebrities and more about the fans, and that desire to be a hero for one day. Fan worship is not confined to light-hearted matters - it also touches on many deeper issues of identification, projection, aspiration, comfort, and other universal concerns. It led her step-by-step to a profound shift in her practice - a complete departure to a new body of works entirely produced with embroidery and tapestry. Under the mischievous title **New York** (her home city) **Blackout** (her early memory of the 1977 power cut plus all pieces suspended by vintage curtain rings) **Tapestries**, we have the pleasure of exhibiting this new body of work for the first time.

Embroidery may in itself be considered an ultimate form of popular art. Not only has it been practiced by generations going back millennia, it also fulfils the cardinal values that craft represents: functionality, decoration, unique input, personification, memory, outsider art, popular traditions and skills transmission. It has been used in clothing, furniture and wall hangings, and has served as a way of bringing high art into humble homes. Though often produced anonymously, it offers a scan of history unlike many other art forms.

Jessica has long been a collector of these rich pickings. Fascinated for many years by the wealth of meaning that embroideries bring, her new works are compositions of complex tableaux stitched into new forms. Colour is central to these works of art in which patching and sewing allow for experimental visual associations, intricate details and effects of movements, abstract compositions and figurative apparitions, all made from the layers of past and present. While completely different from her previous work, this new series is more a continuation than a rupture. Her itinerary as an artist is making a full circle into the exploration of the question: What is art when it reaches us?

Laurent Delaye Gallery

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