

“My work offers a space for speculation and fantasy, contemplation and projection. It is both pre-tech and post-virtual at once.”

Jennifer Lefort

Artist Statement

In the studio, I find myself looking for the coexistence and co-dependence between things: color and pattern, structure and disorder, accidents and intuition, physical and emotional space, and more. I'm fascinated with how contrasting qualities can take us to a place of ease and strangeness or beauty and disorder all at once.

A strong leader in my creative process is color. It can be dark or luminous, full of inherited meaning or deceptively neutral. Color acts as a non-linguistic system of communication. Color holds meaning in our relationship to each other and to our world. Color holds the key to entire collections of psychological spaces. It has the ability to transport us in a way that words can't clearly describe. Over time, while working with sculpture and painting, I've become interested in how color can delimit, yet also remove boundaries from objects and shapes—color can be a boundary bender.

The dawn of my interests in these visual qualities and constructs must have originated in my earliest years. For generations, my father's family tended gardens; from the wild to the meticulously tamed. My mother was a hairstylist; seemingly making something from nothing, taking the wild and transforming it into the tamed. Both sides created worlds of semi-permanence, innovation, illusion, and reorganized chaos.

It's not too surprising then that, to me, the most captivating of visual worlds are the ones that seem to balance precariously on the edge of chaos while thriving in an ecosystem all their own. Spaces that pull me in, hide secrets, boldly display jewels, overwhelm and calm, at the same time. Places where structure is layered and nuanced, raw yet perfect.

With this in mind, I see the work as a place for discovery, contemplation and imagination, which requires a certain vulnerability on behalf of the viewer. As a result, the encounter between a spectator and the work is a moment of intimate unveiling, where colors and gestures reveal themselves as a story as unique as the observer.

Over time, a visual vocabulary has developed throughout my practice: these shapes, symbols and signs collectively help to construct each piece. Used across a body of work, these visual cues serve to create familiarity in a terrain that is otherwise unnamable. Combined, the dialogue between these visual elements weaves a kind of abstract narrative in the image or sculpture. Ultimately, the open-ended potential of abstraction towards meaning, narrative, and the imaginary is what keeps me searching for new outcomes.

Jennifer Lefort 2024



Image Credits: (above) *Sincere Salutations, Cobalt*, 2019, aluminum structure and mixed media; (back cover) *Sincere Salutations, Pink and Black*, 2019, aluminum structure and mixed media.



Exhibited Artworks

All works courtesy of Jennifer Lefort Studio,
Gatineau, Quebec, Canada

Closing In, 2007
acrylic and oil on canvas, 79 x 99 in.

Grand Salon of Ideas (in Pink), 2016
oil, acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 96 x 234 in.

In the Midst (Purple Changes Everything), 2015
oil, acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 96 x 72 in.

Justifying (Feelings in Yellow), 2022
oil on canvas, 60 x 48 in.

Nothing Is Wasted If It Feels Like This, 2018
oil, acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 84 x 72 in.

Sincere Salutations, Cobalt, 2019
aluminum structure and mixed media, 101 x 42 x 42 in.

Sincere Salutations, Pink and Black, 2019
aluminum structure and mixed media, 101 x 42 x 42 in.

Tragedy-Comedy, 2019
acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 72 x 60 in.

What Comes First, 2022
acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 72 x 60 in.

Acknowledgements

To learn more about Jennifer Lefort, visit her website at jenniferlefort.com.

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Jennifer Lefort Grand Salon of Ideas

April 11, 2024 — January 12, 2025



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Jennifer Lefort Abbreviated Biography

Jennifer Lefort (b. 1976, Montreal, Canada) is recognized for her unique and layered approach to abstraction, she was shortlisted for the prestigious Contemporary Art Prize from the Musée National des Beaux Arts du Québec in 2018. In 2016 Lefort received the Artwork of the Year award from the Québec Arts Council and completed an artist residency in Los Angeles, California, awarded through the Canada Council for the Arts. Previous to these distinctions, she received the National Joseph Plaskett Foundation Award. Since 2015, the artist has added to her studio practice and is working on various public art projects across Canada. She maintains an active studio in Gatineau, Quebec, Canada, located near the Nation’s Capital of Ottawa.

Since the pandemic, Lefort has also taken on the role of artistic mentor for emerging indigenous artists working in the public realm. In recent years she has exhibited work at Mindy Solomon Gallery in Miami, Florida; Division Gallery Toronto, Ontario; Parisian Laundry, Montreal, Québec; Equinox Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia; Art Toronto and VOLTA in New York, New York and Basel, Switzerland.

Lefort’s work is included in numerous public collections including the Bank of Montreal, Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec, Québec City; Bombardier Aviation; Musée d'art contemporain des Laurentides, Saint-Jérôme, Quebec; the Royal Bank of Canada Collection, Toronto, Ontario; and Tricon Real Estate Holdings, Toronto, Ontario. Her work is also part of the collection of the Canadian Ministry of Global Affairs, Ottawa, Ontario, currently on view in London, United Kingdom; Copenhagen, Denmark; and Kuwait. The artist’s work is also in private collections in Canada, Germany, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

The artist holds a 2006 Master of Fine Arts from York University, Toronto, Ontario and a Bachelor of Fine Arts, with distinction, from Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. To learn more about Jennifer Lefort’s work, please visit her website at jenniferlefort.com.

Over the past two decades, Canadian artist Jennifer Lefort has garnered increasing critical and public admiration for her large-scale abstract paintings and sculptures. The artist is recognized for her outstanding command of spatial relationships, chromatic intensity, and lavish application of paint. Her work represents a rigorous investigation of the juxtaposition of formal composition versus spontaneous abstraction, depth and surface, and structure and chaos.

I first became aware of Lefort’s work in 2009 and included a number of her pieces in the 2010-2011 multi-institutional exhibition *Beyond/In Western New York*, emphasizing her ascent as one of Canada’s most compelling abstract artists. I was, and continue to be, amazed by the scale of production and visual impact of her large-scale canvases.

Lefort’s work embodies the powerful sense of creation. Through seemingly, or in fact, spontaneous arching gestures and the application of bold, segmented fields of color, the artist employs a unique ability to present unreconciled illustration and simultaneously express moments of complete chaos.

Unlike most of abstract painting today, Lefort’s artistic bravura presents a weighty honesty and a genuine uncertainty about the act of painting—the mess of creation.



Henri Gervex (French, (1852-1929), *A Session of the Painting Jury*, c.1883, oil on canvas, 120 x 165 in. Collection of Musée d’Orsay, Paris, France

Over the past decade, Lefort’s production level, as well as the physical scale of her work, has become even more ambitious. The painting that serves as the namesake for the exhibition, *Grand Salon of Ideas (in pink)* is also the title of the largest work to date by the artist, measuring 20 feet in width: it literally engulfs the viewer’s field of vision. This work was inspired by the 1883 painting titled *A Session of the Painting Jury* by French artist Henri Gervex (1852-1929) which documents the painting jury for the 1883 Académie des Beaux-Arts exhibition, a prestigious artistic society in Paris. Per the patriarchal tradition, there was not one woman juror for this exhibition. Perhaps *Grand Salon of Ideas* represents a new direction of social awareness and historical contemplation for Lefort.

Her more recent venture into sculpture, works such as *Sincere Salutations*, *Cobalt* and *Sincere Salutations*, *Pink and Black* (both 2019), have introduced new vehicles for her exploration of contrast, ephemerality, and material transformation. *Grand Salon of Ideas* is Lefort’s first solo exhibition in an American museum. Her continued experimentation with color, texture, and form, in both painting and sculpture, traverses the evolution of this exceptionally talented Canadian artist.

Michael J. Beam
Curator of Exhibitions and Special Projects

Image Credits: (cover) (detail) *In the Midst (Purple Changes Everything)*, 2015, oil, acrylic and spray paint on canvas; (above) *Grand Salon of Ideas (in Pink)*, 2016, oil, acrylic and spray paint on canvas; (opposite page, left) *Nothing Is Wasted If It Feels Like This*, 2018, oil, acrylic and spray paint on canvas; (opposite page, right) *Tragedy-Comedy*, 2019, acrylic and spray paint on canvas.