

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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The T List: Five Things We Recommend This Week

An exhibition of new work by Stanley Whitney, housewares from Ogata Paris — and more.

Feb. 18, 2021, 9:00 a.m. ET

SEE THIS

The Colorful Canvases of Stanley Whitney

By Chantal McStay

For the past 25 years, the painter Stanley Whitney, a veteran of New York's abstract school, has mined the formal, political and emotional power of color, covering canvases with grids of rich, saturated hues. In keeping with the recent spate of shows dedicated to the work of Black abstract painters, last week saw the opening of the artist's first major solo exhibition in Los Angeles, "Stanley Whitney: How Black Is That Blue," which comprises a suite of 11 works he created last year and is spread across Matthew Marks's two galleries there. The 8-by-8-foot title painting is punctuated with a small black square, highlighted with cerulean and midnight edges, that sits atop a block of lush, opaque azure in the upper left-hand corner of the canvas — a microcosm of the many alluring blues and blacks, along with striking golds, reds, pinks and greens, that echo throughout the show. In "Twenty Twenty" — the largest work on view, at 12 feet wide by 8 feet high — a thin blue line careens off the lower portion of the canvas, tracked by another, in black, that runs parallel to it. The titles of Whitney's paintings are often plucked from his favorite lines in songs or books. "How Black Is That Blue" is lifted from a poem by Osip Mandelstam,



Stanley Whitney's "Twenty Twenty" (2020). © Stanley Whitney, courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery

McStay, Chantal. "The T List: The Colorful Canvases of Stanley Whitney." *T: The New York Times Style Magazine*, February 18, 2021.

but it's also reminiscent of the jazz standard immortalized in Louis Armstrong's rendition of "(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue." (Jazz has long influenced Whitney's paintings.) The works "can have all of these connotations," says Jacqueline Tran, the gallery's senior director, "in addition to presenting a formal question about color." Indeed, each of these paintings, which seem to submerge the viewer in their radiant density of pigment, affirms the truth of Whitney's assertion that "color brings so much emotion and depth to people." *"Stanley Whitney: How Black Is That Blue" is on view through April 10 at Matthew Marks Gallery, 1062 North Orange Grove and 7818 Santa Monica Boulevard, Los Angeles, matthewmarks.com.*