



Nathalie Provosty

Born Cincinnati, Ohio, 1981

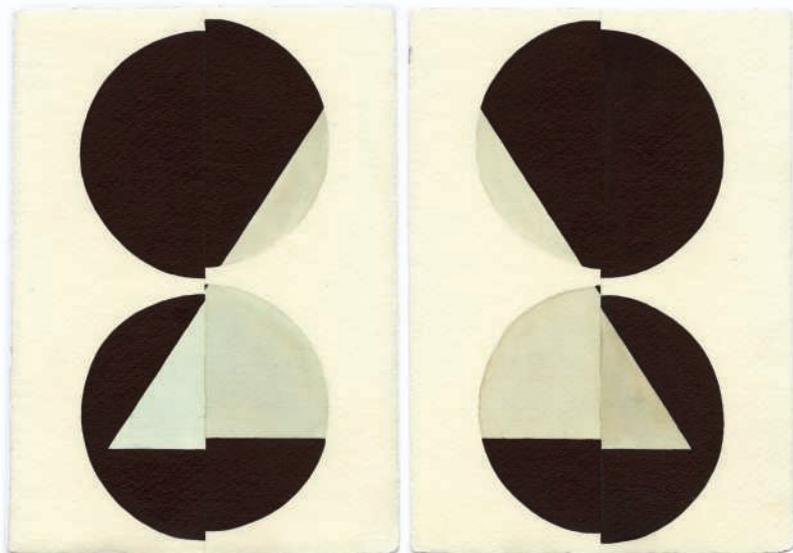
Nathalie Provosty is a painter of single-colour abstracts, some of them black. Critics have drawn parallels with Ad Reinhardt's black paintings, a comparison Provosty regards as 'flattering, but limited'. Peer closely at her paintings, though, and they are altogether less restrained, less dense and more colourful than they first seem: blues, greys and even reds become discernible. Towards the perimeter, a flash of vibrant colour seems to creep out from under the darkness. 'Each painting has a whole different range,' she says. 'And the pigments are layered: you see things coming through from underneath.'

An enjoiner to look lies at the heart of her practice. 'As an undergraduate student, I painted from life,' she says. 'I wanted to learn to see, and at the time, I recognised seeing as looking.

I didn't recognise seeing as thinking.' A Fulbright fellowship to study in India helped to counteract what she viewed as her 'Western notion of seeing'.

Provosty is immersed in the Western canon, too; her conversation is filled with references to Joseph Beuys, Leonardo da Vinci, Manet, Malevich and Nietzsche. She is clearly a deep thinker, for whom what we can see is only the beginning. 'Certain dark colours [are] at the edge of the human visible-colours spectrum,' she says; beyond this lie imperceptible 'territories' that we can't see, but we can experience. In a similar way, we should be open to the inaudible 'subsonic energies and sounds' they transmit. It's scientific, says Provosty: 'It's felt.' This goes some way to explaining the name of her most recent exhibition, at Nathalie Karg Gallery in New York City: *My Pupil is an Anvil*, which refers to the hole in the iris through

Opposite, Nathalie Provosty and *Resonance II*, 2016. Below, *Council, Untitled (16-20)*, 2016. Bottom, *Life of Forms*, 2017



which light strikes the retina, and the small bone in the ear that registers vibrations.

Provosty's work is about more than fields of colour. She incorporates shapes, too, dividing the linen canvas into four or six subtly differentiated rectangles. Some contain huge, not always legible forms that hint at letters or numbers, and which Provosty chooses for the 'language of their shape'. So the 'U' in *Life of Forms* – a monumental work that measures 14ft x 16ft – is intended as a 'gesture of gravity and yet also buoyancy'. It is gloss to the ground's matte, so that the viewer catches sight of a reflection and unwittingly becomes 'an element of the painting'.

Not all Provosty's paintings are made on such a scale. And not everything is dark. Witness the watery eau de Nil and acid greens of two recent diptychs, *Left (Closed Eye Vision)* and *Right (Closed Eye Vision)*, or the palette of whites in *Turn*, which on inspection reveals subtle shades of yellow and peach – all of which suggests a kind of alchemy at work. 'Painting is transformation,' said Provosty in an interview last year. 'Solid particles become liquid and then solid again, but in a new form. The particles are very basic: mineral and metal combined with light and mind in order to create experience. Sometimes art occurs.' nathaliekarg.com. www.apalazzo.net

