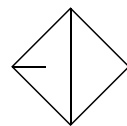




Mette Tommerup
Ocean Loop

January 26 - February 24, 2018



EMERSON
DORSCH



Ocean Loop, 2018 Site-specific Installation.
Cotton canvas, saltwater, blue dye

Mette Tommerup

Out to Sea

by Eleanor Heartney



Ocean Loop, 2018 Site-specific Installation.
Cotton canvas, saltwater, blue dye

In the digital age, we search for tactile metaphors to describe our new state of being. Many of these derive from the natural world:

we store our information in a cloud, float through cyberspace and colonize the electronic frontier. Among the most compelling metaphors are those related to water: we stream data, surf the web, follow flows of information and navigate a sea of knowledge. Water provides an appealing trope in the era of internet communication because it evokes boundlessness, mutability and freedom. In her ambitious installation *Ocean Loop*, Mette Tommerup marries the virtual and the physical, creating an immersive experience that uses the ocean

as a springboard for an exploration of the way the mind works in our digital world. Tommerup's connection to the ocean is an elemental one. As a native of Denmark, she grew up in a small coastal town in a country whose history, back to the Viking days, is entwined with the sea. She now lives in Miami close to Biscayne Bay. Her studio offers a view of the harbor from which she was able to view the devastation wrecked by Hurricane Irma in the fall of 2017 while she was preparing this work.

The ocean would thus seem to be a natural subject for Tommerup. In fact, however, this installation presents something of a departure. Tommerup is better known for piquant and often provocative expressionistic paintings inspired by internet image searches. She initiated this project as part of an effort to literally wash away her old assumptions and approaches to art. Using the ocean both as a grand metaphor and a physical portal, she decided to go back to ground zero and think about what paintings can be.

This led her to a series of experiments that have something of the flavor of postwar avant-garde movements like Gutai, Arte Povera and Conceptual Art. Tommerup attached small oil paintings of the sea to a string and immersed them in the ocean. Some broke free and disappeared. She was able to reel others back in, battered and discolored by salt and water. Tommerup



Ocean Loop, 2018 Site-specific Installation.
Cotton canvas, saltwater, blue dye

repeated the experiment with squares of raw canvas, and after retrieving them, sewed their water stained remains together. She grew salt crystals on paintings. She treated raw canvas with blue dye and salt water to create a surface that suggests the patterns that dance just below the skin of rippling water.

Tommerup employed more conventional techniques as well. She painted thick brushy seascapes and abstractions that echo the shifting green-blue hues of the ocean. For many of these works, she free-associated, emulating the way that internet searches can lead one far afield from the original object of investigation. The ocean sparked thoughts of tropical idylls, suggested by paintings of a banana and a flower lei. Other imaginings yielded a dog, a swan and a pair of legs disappearing into the opaque blue water. Some paintings suggest the phosphorescent creatures that

live deep below. Tommerup also worked with the recurring image of a mandala whose cog-like spiral form evokes the original experiment involving paintings linked together by a string.

“ Rounding out this compendium of ocean images is a set of digital works. ”

These are based on photographs of the beach that have been digitally bent, stretched, over-painted and otherwise distorted to create fanciful patterns that slide effortlessly between realism and abstraction. Some of these feature the photographic image of a gold frame incongruously lodged among large pitted black rocks on the shore. Tommerup notes that she found this frame after it had washed away from a Santeria altar built on

the beach. In its poignant displacement, it reminded her of her own lost paintings, whose ultimate destination will always remain a mystery.

Arrayed along the four walls of the gallery and roughly following the horizon line of the sea, all these works become elements in a larger mosaic. They form a kind of narrative that reflects the way we perceive the world now. Not strictly linear, this is a story that jumps and backtracks and opens out into new streams of thought. One inspiration for this arrangement is the work of French artist Camille Henrot who also compiles masses of heterogeneous materials and objects in installations that speak to the complexity of life today. One senses as well the spirit of *Rhapsody*, American painter Jennifer Bartlett's 1976 magnum opus. That massive work consists of an enormous grid of images that form an inventory of all the components (subject matter, style,



Banana Fantasy, 2018 Site-specific Installation
Oil on canvas
48" x 60"



Horizon Seam, 2018
Sewn, dyed cotton canvas
48" x 72"

colors, marks and shapes) that comprise painting. Like Bartlett, Tommerup offers a catalog of different kinds of knowledge and perception, using the ocean as an organizing principle.

For the viewer, *Ocean Loop* is a visual treat. Paintings with recognizable images play off against others that use form and color to conjure a mood. Some sections present the ocean, not as representation, but as a physical force that acts on and alters the surfaces of ripped and crinkled canvas. One gets a sense of the ocean as a repository of myriad emotions ranging from serenity and peace to excitement and fear. One is also reminded of the role that the sea plays in our cultural imagination. The ocean is a major protagonist in mythology, poetry, art and literature. It reveals many aspects in the paintings of artists as diverse as Eugene

Delacroix, Winslow Homer, J. M. W. Turner, Richard Diebenkorn and David Hockney. Tommerup taps into this history, celebrating our primordial connection with the sea.

By refusing to reduce the Ocean to a single thing, Tommerup explores its potential as a symbol of our restless minds. Ever advancing and retreating, connecting and separating, raging and becalming, it reminds us of the vastness of the universe and the ever-expanding reach of human consciousness.



Far Near Ocean Scrap, 2018
Digital image output on canvas
40" x 60"

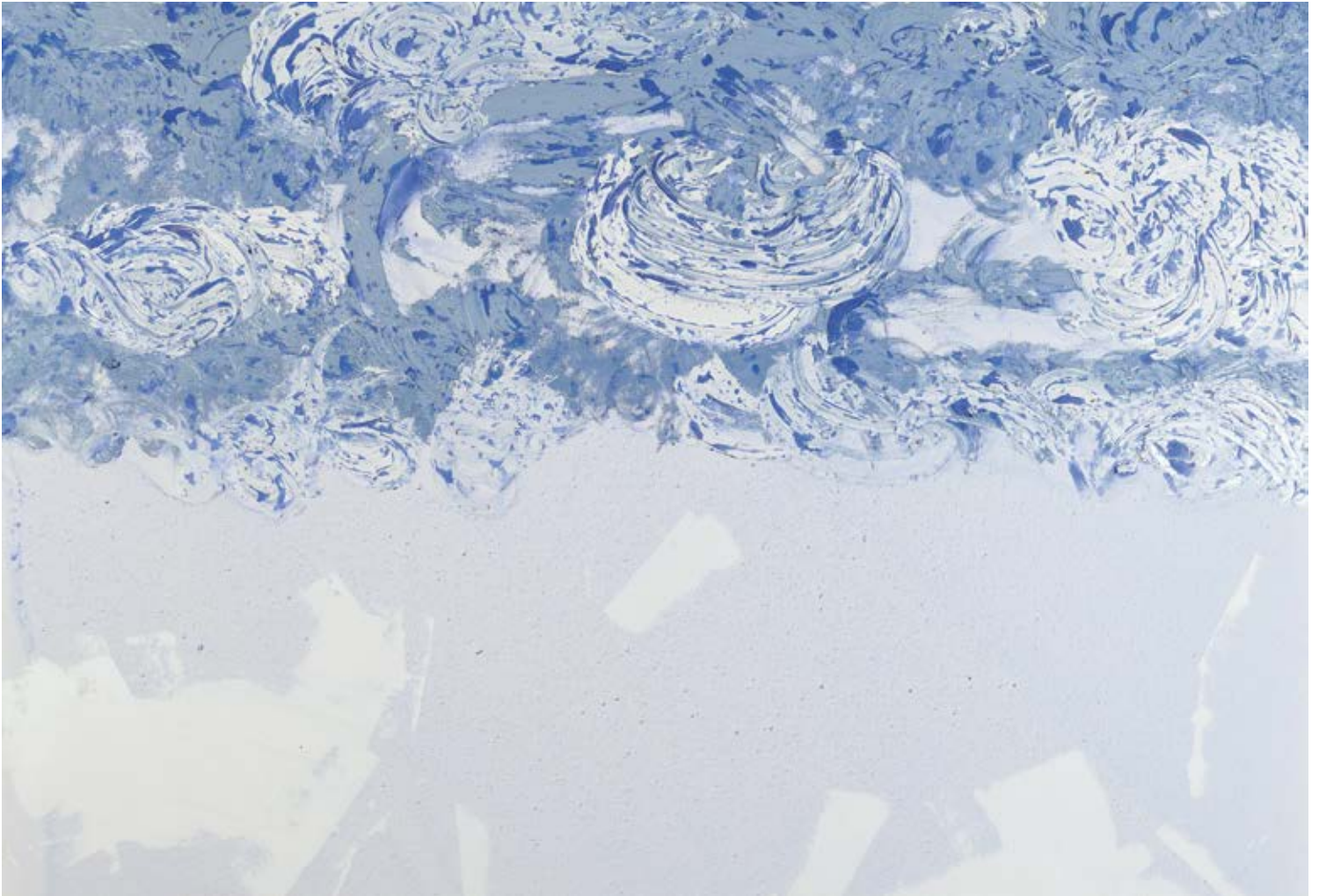
ABOUT METTE TOMMERUP

Mette Tommerup is a painter based in Miami. Originally from Denmark, Tommerup has held numerous solo exhibitions in Copenhagen as well as group shows in Berlin and Basel. Tommerup relocated to Miami in the late 90's after living and studying in New York City for many years. Tommerup has exhibited at The Chelsea Art Museum, Exit Art and the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York City. In Miami, Tommerup has exhibited at The Bass, PAMM and The Frost Museum and has work in many private collections including work in the permanent collection of PAMM. Ocean Loop will be Tommerup's 3rd solo show at Emerson Dorsch Gallery. Honors include acquisition of work through the Art Purchase Program at The American Academy of Arts and Letters in NYC. Publications include Miami Contemporary

Artists, Miami Arts Explosion, 100 Degrees in the Shade and Man as Object: Reversing the Gaze and exhibitions have been reviewed in Art in America, Artnet.com and the Miami Herald among other journals. Tommerup received an MFA at School of Visual Arts in New York City in 1995.

ABOUT ELEANOR HEARTNEY

A widely published art historian, Eleanor Heartney is former editor of Art in America and author of *Defending Complexity: Art, Politics and the New World Order* (Hard Press Editions, 2006) and a co-author of *After the Revolution: Women who Transformed Contemporary Art* (Prestel Publishing, 2007), which won the Susan Koppelman Award, among other books.



Port/Portal, 2018 Site-specific Installation.
Oil on canvas
60" x 48"



EMERSON
DORSCH

5900 NW 2nd Ave, Miami, FL 33138

305.576.1278

info@emersondorsch.com

emersondorsch.com