

LISSON

JOYCE PENSATO



BIOGRAPHY

Joyce Pensato painted exuberant, explosive large-scale likenesses of cartoon characters and comic-book heroes. Her seemingly frenzied technique – actually involving the deliberate accretion of successive layers of bold linear gestures, rapid spattering and frequent erasures – results in alternately humorous and sinister imagery. While her prima facie subject matter ranges from Batman, The Simpsons and Mickey Mouse to Felix the Cat and Elmo from Sesame Street, her artistic progenitors include Alberto Giacometti, Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Abstract Expressionists such as Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline and Philip Guston.

As well as excising her floating heads from the contexts of Gotham, Disneyland, Springfield or South Park, Pensato situated her figures in troubling psychological states and indeterminate spaces. The true source of their meaning is concealed, not only by successive sweeps of paint, but beneath the guileless grin of Donald Duck or the Caped Crusader's eye-less mask. Taking much of her material from her surroundings in her hometown of Brooklyn, New York, USA – from graffitied walls to hand-scrawled shop signs – Pensato painted almost exclusively in shop-bought black and white enamel, while also employing charcoal and pastel for smaller-scale drawings. In recent years Pensato begun painting oversized murals, often taking weeks to complete, while there were also occasional leaps away from the monochrome world she generally inhabits into sporadic bursts of colour, especially silver and gold.

Joyce Pensato (1941-2019) was born in Brooklyn, New York, USA. Solo exhibitions include Kunstraum Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria (2016),

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, USA (2015) and Santa Monica Museum of Art, USA (2013). Pensato's work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA; SFMoMA, San Francisco, USA; the Hammer Museum, USA, Los Angeles, USA; the Dallas Museum of Art; St Louis Art Museum and the FRAC des Pays de la Loire, France. She has won numerous awards including the Robert de Niro Sr. Prize (2013), the Award of Merit Medal for Painting, given by the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2012), the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Award (1997) and the Guggenheim Fellowship (1996).