

Jennie C. Jones

Dark Gray with 1/2 Measure

2013

Acoustic panel and acrylic on canvas

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Purchased with funds contributed by the

Young Collectors Council 2015.70

Synesthesia is the phenomenon of perceiving one sense through another. Often, it describes the sensation of seeing music or hearing color. Aural experience is integral to Jones's visual art, and she characterizes her work in terms of loudness and softness, referring to its components as "blocks of sound" with specific tones, pitches, and melodies. "I've always felt like I don't use a lot of color because it's too loud to me," she has said. Jones compares the dominant grays in her work to radio static, while the reds and yellows have a piercing quality, "like feedback from an amp." The overall effect of her carefully calibrated colorscares, as in the gray and glowing yellow of *Dark Gray with 1/2 Measure*, can encourage stillness, mindfulness, and abstract thought.



Jennie C. Jones

Phrasing to the Floor (softly as in a morning sunrise)

2021

Architectural felt and acrylic on canvas, three parts

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

Red Tone #1 (Clipped)

2021

Architectural felt and acrylic on canvas board

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

Red Tone Burst #2

2021

Architectural felt and acrylic on canvas board
Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago

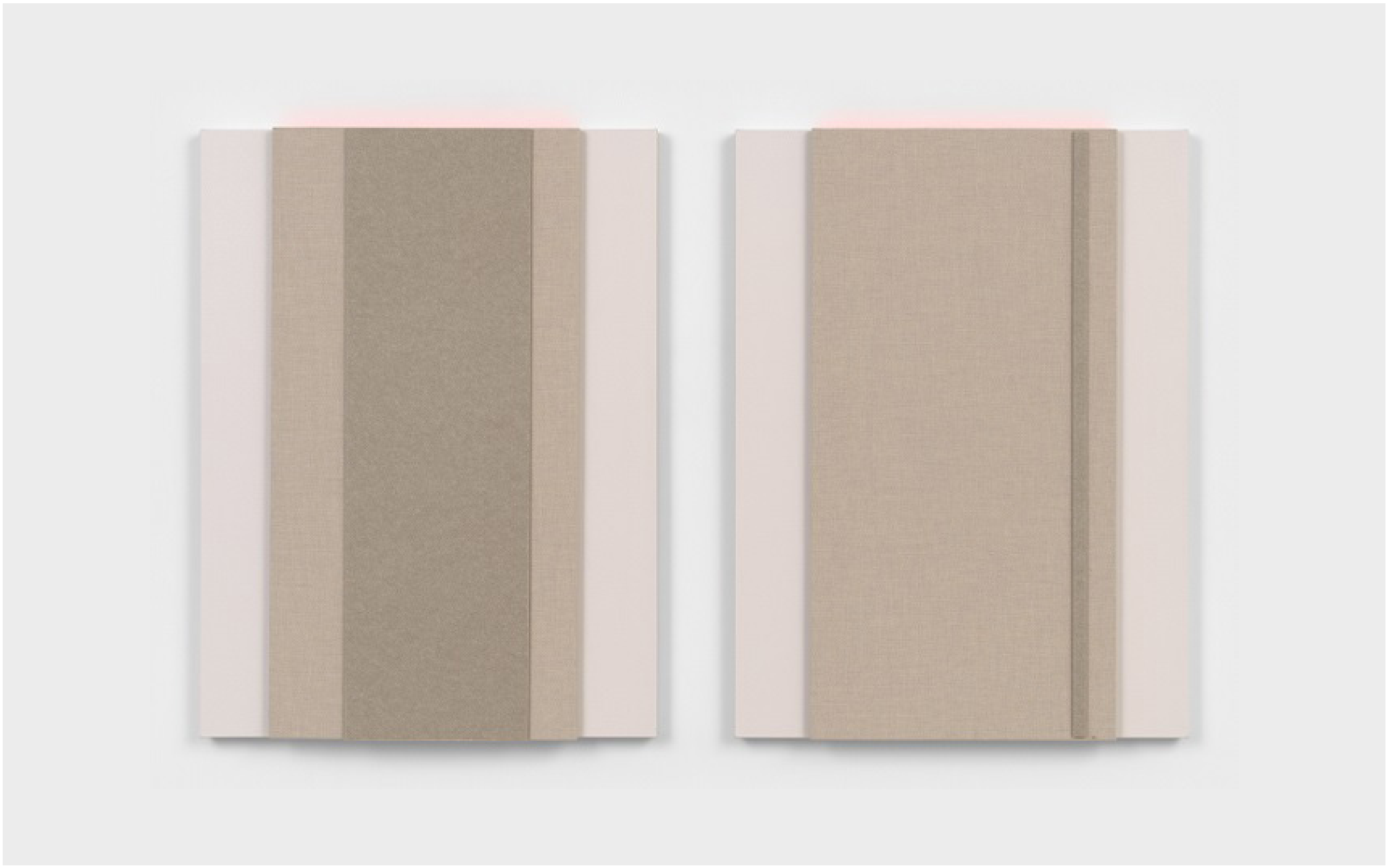


Jennie C. Jones

Red Tone Burst #3

2021

Architectural felt and acrylic on canvas board
Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

Neutral [clef] Structure 1st & 2nd

2021

Acoustic panel, architectural felt, and acrylic on canvas, diptych

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates, New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

Split Bar, End Note

2021

Acoustic panel, architectural felt, and acrylic on canvas, diptych

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates, New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

Open Structure, Split Bar

2021

Acoustic panel, architectural felt, and acrylic on canvas, diptych

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates, New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago

The history of Minimalism is often seen as apart from the main currents of African American art in the twentieth century. “There is an ache inherent in Minimalism,” Jones counters, “the distillation of so much existential matter into a single line, a solitary gesture. It is an offshoot to a bombastic, expressive discourse around Black abstraction and it leads to a questioning: what is my Blackness without vigorous expression of my ‘circumstance.’” Moving away from conventional expectations of what work by a Black artist must convey, Jones embraces the delicate opacity of geometric abstraction. “Minimalism proposes somewhat of a disciplined, reductive nature in its pared down nature while offering a subtle pulse of an internal yearning that operates outside of language,” she explains. The physical presence of Jones’s artwork and the carefully calibrated visual and aural environments it creates stem from her commitment to rejecting staid binaries in art-making and asserting her agency to reactivate a more complex history of avant-garde art and music. In looking at one of her black paintings, “there’s a lot underneath,” Jones says, describing the process as “a conceptual system of removal or reduction,” with expressive elements that are rendered private and opaque within the formal parameters she has established for her work.



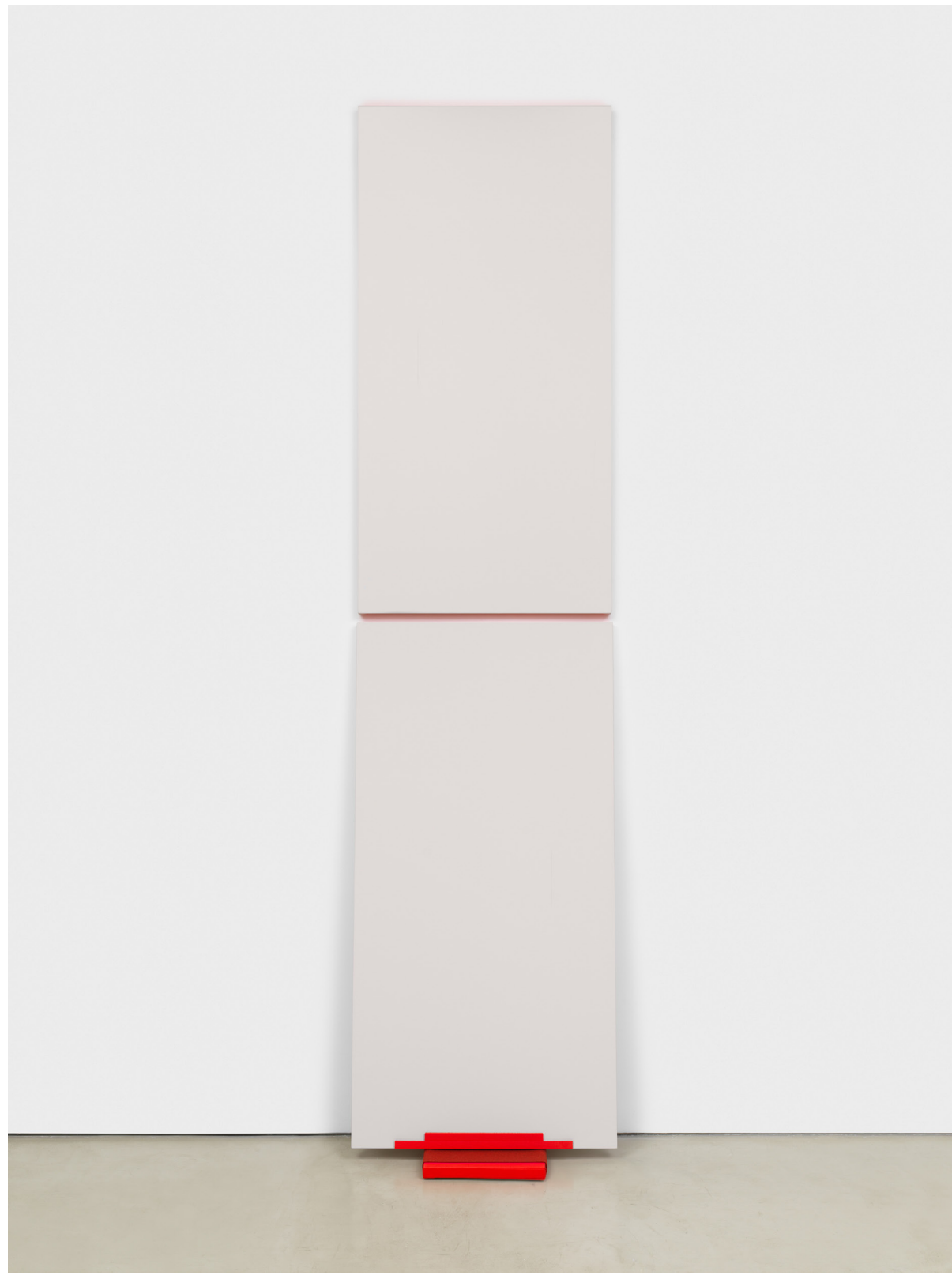
Jennie C. Jones

Untitled (Black Tone Shift)

2021

Architectural felt and acrylic on canvas

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

Phrasing to the Pedal Point

2021

Acrylic on canvas and felt, three parts

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago

High Gallery

This gallery features Jones's *Acoustic Panel Paintings*, wall-based works comprising planes of color and geometric forms that evoke musical notation. "I always return to materials, geometry, the language of notation, and sonic thought as my parameters," Jones recently reflected. For the artist, looking and listening are intertwined phenomena. The pieces in this series incorporate architectural felt, an industrial material that she had not previously employed. The felt combines with the noise-absorbing foam panels also used in the works to dampen sound in the gallery. The muted colors on the surface of the acoustic panels are interrupted by moments of vibrant color. The edges of some works, such as *Fractured Extension/Broken Time*, are painted with a hot red acrylic paint that casts a halo onto the gallery walls, creating what the artist describes as a "tone burst."

The gallery also includes a three-part work made of panels that protrude from the wall, engaging the floor. The title *Phrasing to the Pedal Point*, like that of many of Jones's works, refers to musical notation or composition. The pedal point in musical composition is a continuous tone or note that is held or repeated during which other chords or notes are played on a given instrument. The result is often a dissonant harmony. In the artwork, this concept emerges through the visual and aural tension created between the quiet of the white wall-based acoustic panels and the bright red neon of the felt-wrapped floor-based support. Audible from the sixth level of the museum's ramp, near the building's dome, is a sound work, *Oculus Tone* (2021). The work, like *Phrasing to the Pedal Point*, features a droning tone that is held for several minutes. This composition accompanies the physical objects in this gallery, offering an aural analogue to the red tones and percussive qualities conveyed in Jones's visual art.



Jennie C. Jones

Grey Score (for Agnes)

2012

Series of three diptychs, paper collage and silkscreen ink on paper

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates, New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago

Agnes Martin (1912–2004) was an abstract painter whose work exemplified how a rich aesthetic vocabulary could be created through subdued colors and an economy of form. Martin, the subject of a retrospective held at the Guggenheim in 2016, worked with grays and whites, often creating a dynamic tension between painted gestures and impersonal, grid-based compositions. *Grey Score (for Agnes)*, from 2012, was inspired by Martin. Jones explains, “I spent a lot of time thinking about gray, not as a noncolor but as hush, as mute, as quiet. And the color gray’s relationship to sound and sound work.” In the mid-twentieth century, some critics regarded abstract art, especially that by male painters, as a purely optical experience; by reapproaching the historical work of women artists in a contemporary setting, Jones instead reveals interconnected histories of multisensory experience.



Jennie C. Jones

Broken Bar Line

2013

Acoustic panel and acrylic on clayboard, diptych
Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

Tritone (Dissonant)

2015

Acoustic panel, felt, and acrylic on canvas

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates, New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago

The artist describes some of her work as the “physical residue of music,” a phrase that resonates broadly across her practice. In the case of *Tritone (Dissonant)*, in addition to exploring the literal effects of sound-dampening material, through the use of felt Jones encourages metaphorical connections between looking and listening. The title refers to tritones, a term from Western music theory designating music with three consecutive whole steps between notes in an octave. For Jones, the subdued three-tone color in *Tritone (Dissonant)* represents not a Minimalist reduction of form, but something closer to a maximalist conception of a work that affects the real space inhabited by the viewer. “The idea of lack can be turned on its head in order to be perceived as pure potential and opportunity,” Jones observes. “Perhaps this relates directly to African American improvisation and creative utility, to working inventively with spare means.”



Jennie C. Jones

Open Score #1

2019

Monotype

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

Fractured Extension/Broken Time

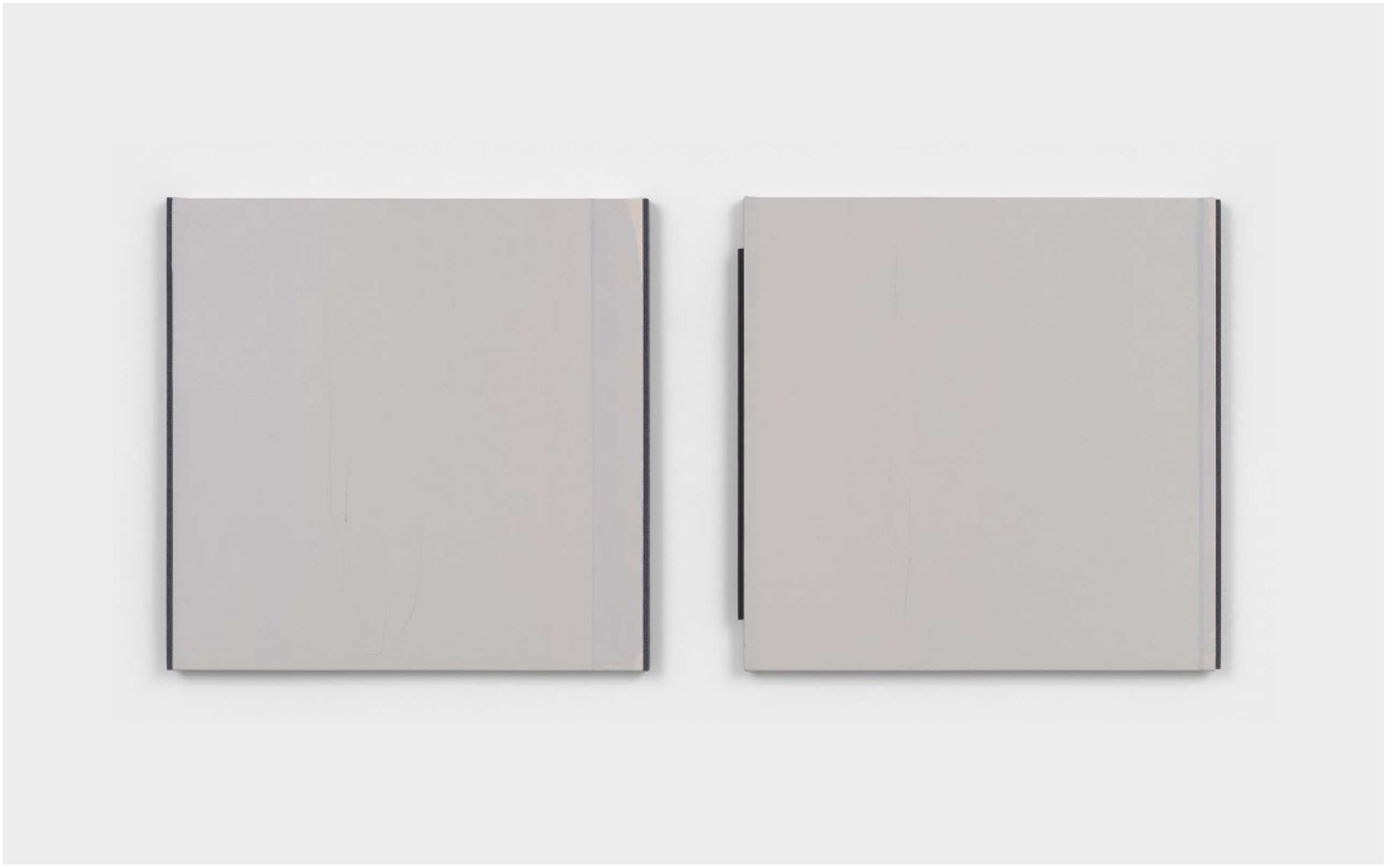
2021

Acoustic panel, architectural felt, and acrylic on canvas, diptych

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Purchased with funds contributed by the

International Director's Council 2021.33



Jennie C. Jones

Grey / Gray Measures #1 & #2

2021

Architectural felt and acrylic on canvas board, diptych

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,

New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

Soft, Pitchless Measure (Dark Red)

2021

Architectural felt and acrylic on canvas

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

Sub Tone, Dark Edge

2021

Architectural felt and acrylic on canvas

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

Soft, Pitchless Measure Oxide Edge

2021

Architectural felt and acrylic on canvas

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

Neutral Pitchless Measure, Rest

2021

Architectural felt and acrylic on canvas

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

Gray Pitchless Measure, Black Edge

2021

Architectural felt and acrylic on canvas

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



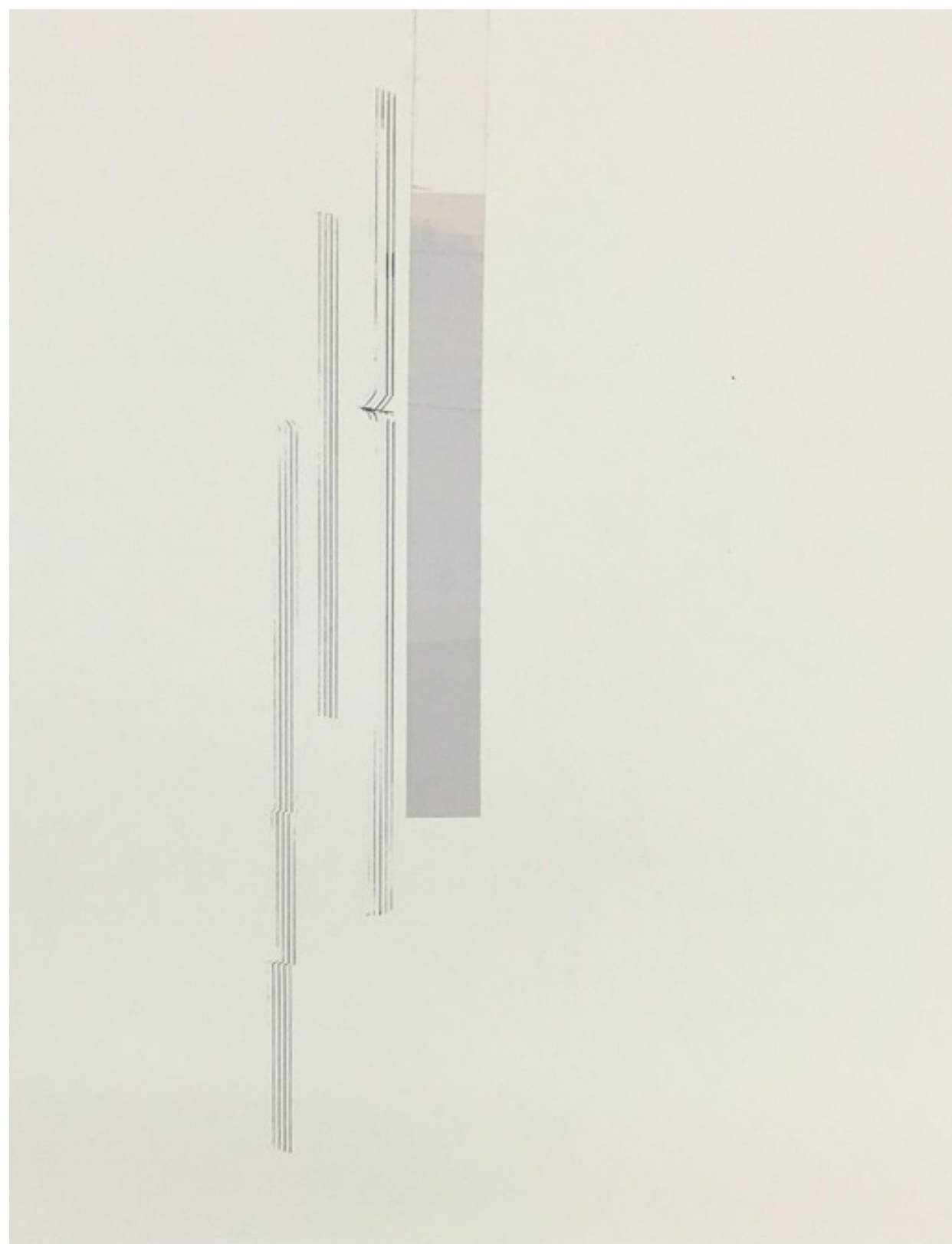
Jennie C. Jones

Phrasing to the Floor Study

2018–19

Acrylic on canvas, three parts

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

A Score for Tenderness and Grace

2021

Set of ten ink, acrylic, and paper collages, mounted on paper

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates, New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago

The abstracted motifs in the geometric drawings that Jones refers to as “scores” feature collaged elements that reinterpret the musical staff, the conventional structure in Western musical notation onto which notes and other symbols are placed. With these drawings, Jones revisits the tradition of graphical notation, an expanded approach to representing music pioneered by avant-garde musicians in the twentieth century. Rather than delineating individual notes, as in traditional sheet music, graphical notation encouraged performers to improvise and conveyed the feeling, duration, and intensity of music in a free-form way.

Jones’s scores represent her career-long practice of producing works on paper. The serial nature of this practice also imbues a mechanical quality that she compares to the imprinted grooves on a vinyl album, which contain the indexical trace of music. Critic Hilton Als observes the artist’s concern with the “permanence and impermanence of black sounds, black culture,” arguing that “Jones’s drawings are about time too; the time it took to listen, to draw, to look, and for the experience to recede into other experiences that might or might not be as full.”



Jennie C. Jones

Graphite Movement #3 (Guggenheim)

2021

Ink and acrylic on paper, diptych

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago

Jennie C. Jones

Oculus Tone

2021

Sound installation, 3 min.

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago



Jennie C. Jones

Untitled (Open Measure)

2021

Acoustic panel, architectural felt, and acrylic on canvas

Courtesy the artist; Alexander Gray Associates,

New York; and Patron Gallery, Chicago

Jennie C. Jones: Constant Structure

2020

Artist book with essay by Fred Moten, designed by
Ronnie Fueglistter (The Arts Club of Chicago)