



**Educator Resource**

# **Jessica Stockholder**

## **The Squared Circle: Ringing**

April 17, 2025 — August 3, 2025

# Exhibition Overview

*The Squared Circle: Ringing* is a new commission by **Jessica Stockholder** that is a playful conversation between painting and sculpture. MOCA's Floor 1 is painted with vibrant colours that highlight her transformation of the space with found objects and architectural structures. The centrepiece of this sprawling work is a boxing ring, which acts as vehicle for exploring themes of connection and collision. This site-specific work also uses poetic language: Stockholder engages with the museum's messaging, altering and interrupting them to shift viewers' attention toward the beauty and complexity of language.

## About the Artist

Born in Seattle (b. 1959), Washington, Jessica Stockholder currently lives and works in Nanaimo, British Columbia. Her extensive exhibition history spans museums, galleries, and biennials internationally and Stockholder's work is included in the permanent collections of numerous institutions.

In addition to exhibiting, creating and curating, Jessica Stockholder spent two decades teaching the next generation of artists, first as director and professor of graduate studies in sculpture at Yale University, where she taught co-exhibiting artist Alex Da Corte, and as Art History professor and faculty chair at the University of Chicago. She retired from teaching last year.

Jessica Stockholder's work is experimental in nature. Many of her sculptures feature unexpected objects like plastic bags, shopping carts, lamps, extension cords, carpets, furniture, and vehicles, among other materials. Her compositions are often referred to as "paintings in space." Her works resist quick observation; their depth and scale invite gradual exploration from different vantage points, continuously revealing new elements as a visitor explores the space. Her work resists easy categorization, described as all of the following: colour field painting, abstract expressionism, minimalism, and theatre.

## Ontario Curriculum Connections

### Visual Art

*Grade 6 – 8*

D1. Creating and Presenting  
D2. Reflecting, Responding and Analysing  
D3. Exploring Forms and Cultural Contexts

*Grade 9 – 12*

A. Creating and Presenting  
B. Reflecting, Responding and Analysing  
C. Foundation

### Language Studies

*Grade 6 – 8*

C. Comprehension:  
Understanding and Responding to Texts

### English

*Grade 9 – 12*

Comprehension:  
Understanding and Responding to Texts

### Themes

- Architecture
- The Body
- Colour
- Connection
- Materiality
- Perspective
- Space
- Surface
- Gathering

# Guided Questions

## Elementary (K-8)

What **materials** do you see? How do you think Stockholder created this?

What stands out to you about the **materials** that you found in the exhibition, did you expect to see them in an art museum? Why or why not?

What **colours** do you notice? Why do you think the artist chose these colours?

Would you call this a painting? Why or why not?

## Key Terms

**Abstraction** art that does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of a visual reality but instead uses shapes, colours, forms and gestural marks to achieve its effect

**Materiality** refers to the physical substances that artists use to bring their visions to life

**Found Objects** a natural or man-made object, or fragment of an object, that is found (or sometimes bought) by an artist and kept because of some intrinsic interest the artist sees in it. For example: Marcel Duchamp's ready-made art

## Secondary (9-12)

Why do you think some people might call this a painting, while others would call it a sculpture?

How does Jessica Stockholder use **colour** in *The Squared Circle: Ringing* to engage the viewer?

Do you see any objects you are familiar with used in this exhibition? How does Jessica Stockholder transform **found objects** into something different than its original purpose?

What sort of narrative can you discover in this exhibition? What symbols, materials or evidence does the artist use to tell this story?

Many of her exhibitions, like this one, are made for the space they're exhibited in. They are **site-specific**, or 'in situ'. What happens when this show ends? Does the art still exist even if it's only seen through photographs?

**Concrete Poetry** A way of writing poetry where the poem takes the shape of what it is about. Stockholder wrote a poem about triangles that is in the shape of a triangle

**Colour Field Painting** A style of abstract painting that features large areas of a single colour

**Minimalism** art that emphasizes simplicity and focuses on the essentials of form and colour

**Site-specific** art made specifically for a location and that connects to that place

# Activity

## Grades

### 6-8

### Paintings in Space

[40 minutes]

Students will apply Jessica Stockholder's artistic process by developing a collaborative, site-specific installation that experiments with colour, material, form and everyday objects

#### Activity Instructions

Step 1: Divide student into groups

Step 2: Each group is sourced with various materials (ex. Coloured paper, painters tape, cardboard, found objects, textiles)

Step 3: Challenge students to develop a site-specific installation in an area of the classroom. Ask students to consider how their artwork engages with the surrounding space, walls, floor, and furniture. Consider how the artwork can extend beyond a two-dimensional surface and into a multi-dimensional work, much like Jessica Stockholder's work

Step 4: Ask each group to share their artwork, explaining their choices in form, material, and colour.

**Jessica Stockholder** describes her site-specific installations as a 'painting in space'. This practice challenges traditional boundaries between painting, sculpture, and architecture. Her installations aim to create a new understanding of what a painting can be through using more than paint on a flat canvas. Her works spill onto the walls and floors and incorporate found objects to transform spaces into experiences.

#### Learning Objectives

This learning workshop provides students with the themes presented in Jessica Stockholder's *The Squared Circle: Ringing* (2025) through hands-on activities, critical reflection, and group collaboration.

#### Discussion Questions

- The themes in this exhibition include sculpture and abstraction, what other themes does your work explore?
- How is your 'painting in space' different from a traditional painting on canvas?

# Image Credits

Jessica Stockholder, *The Squared Circle: Ringing*, installation view, MOCA Toronto, 2025. © Jessica Stockholder.  
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## Resources

### Watch

Louisiana Channel | [Disturbing the Meaning of Objects](#) | Artist Jessica Stockholder  
Nasher Sculpture Center | [The Surface as a Place of Imagination: Artist Jessica Stockholder](#)

### Read

MOCA Toronto | [Jessica Stockholder](#) | [The Squared Circle: Ringing](#)  
Mitchell-Innes & Nash Gallery | [Jessica Stockholder](#)  
Carnegie Museum of Art | [Jessica Stockholder: Picture Making and Assembling](#)  
Archives of Women Artists Research & Exhibitions | [Jessica Stockholder](#)  
[Artforum](#) | [1000 Words: Jessica Stockholder](#)  
Artspace | ["My Work Isn't About Junk": Jessica Stockholder on Debunking Common \(Mis\)Understandings of Her Work](#)