

**JESSICA DIAMOND**  
Wheel Of Life



# **ACCESSIBILITY BROCHURE**

Visual Descriptions

**HIRSHHORN**

 Smithsonian

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## EXHIBITION ENTRANCE

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### Jessica Diamond: Wheel Of Life

#### Wall Text:

Jessica Diamond (b. New York City, 1957) emerged on the art scene in the early 1980s with text-based artworks that called attention to the message-driven culture of the time. While part of a generation of artists who combined Pop and Conceptual art practices with allusions to mass media and advertising, Diamond stands apart from her peers with a uniquely personal voice that comes across through handwritten works that she refers to as poetical texts. Alternating between pithy slogans—such as “Eat Sugar Spend Money” and “Goodbye Edward Hopper”—and long-form prose layered with often oblique cultural references (“O Capital Of Capital/What Would Orphan Annie Say:/Why Is An Oreo Cookie/Not Made In The U.S. Of A.?”), Diamond’s texts challenge the onslaught of consumer culture by giving voice to its subliminal messages and offering alternative thoughts to consider. Literature also serves as a continual touchstone for Diamond, with references here including Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854), Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), and James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922).

*Wheel Of Life* is Diamond’s largest installation to date, consisting of fifteen works that span the circumference of these galleries. Taking inspiration from the Hirshhorn’s iconic circular architecture, the installation offers what Diamond refers to as “meditations on the metaphysics of the circle.” As the title suggests, the connective tissue between individual artworks is the cycle of life, seen from Diamond’s personal vantage point as she looks back on her life as an artist approaching the fifth decade of her career. As the installation unfolds, we catch glimpses of this life in the arts—from childhood memories and imaginative encounters to financial pressures, cascading cause and effect, infinite expressions of love and perseverance, and a never-ending dance of resilience. Translating these experiences into a language of poetry and symbols, she offers them as a key—one that needs to be deciphered—to her formula of how to live a fiercely independent life.

Curated by Gianni Jetzer, former curator-at-large, with Betsy Johnson, assistant curator

*Jessica Diamond: Wheel Of Life* has been made possible with the generous support of the Hirshhorn International Council.

**hi**

Let Hirshhorn Eye guide you through *Jessica Diamond: Wheel Of Life*. Visit **hi.si.edu** and scan the “cool cat” image to activate a video tour of select works.

**Visual Description:**

The exhibition *Jessica Diamond: Wheel Of Life* opens with a large white wall with black text that reads:

JESSICA DIAMOND

Wheel Of Life

Below the title to the left is a small clear brochure holder. To the right of the holder are two symbols. The first is black text that reads “hi”; the dot of the *i* is a small eyeball. The second is a small drawing of a bright red cat wearing round black sunglasses. The two large paragraphs of introduction text fill the right side of the wall.

The exhibition artworks that follow are described moving clockwise from the entry wall through a long, curved gallery with artworks on a white wall on the left and windows on the right. The gallery is widest at the start of the exhibition, near the escalators, and gradually narrows as you move to the opposite side of the circle, widening once again as you move through the second half of the circle to return to the starting point.

***Apple Season (Artist's Life #2)***

2017/2023

Acrylic and latex paint on wall

**Visual Description:**

Capitalized black words are centered on a grass-green rectangle that runs from the floor to about a foot and a half below the ceiling on a large, curved white wall. At the center of the green rectangle, the text forms the shape of an apple atop a flowerpot and reads:

*LET  
ME  
BE*

*ANTIQUÉ AMERICAN APPLE TREES  
PRODUCE THE LONG AGO VARIETIES  
AND FORGOTTEN SHAPES OF THE FRUIT*

*NATURALLY OCCURRING RESISTANCE  
DISPLAYED*

*INDEPENDENT BIRDSONG  
A  
DECLARATION*

*\**

*LIFE LIVED IN THE WOODS  
OF PENCIL STICKS, COTTON, CHARCOAL, AND STONES*

*SIXTEEN THOUSAND AND SOMETHING  
VARIETIES OF THE POMME*

*TEN THOUSAND SCENTS  
NEVER TO BE SEEN*

### ***Ellipsis (3 Circles)***

2021/2023

Acrylic paint on wall

#### **Visual Description:**

Three large, solid black circles, each roughly the size of a bicycle wheel, are situated along the dappled black and white floor board of an otherwise empty white wall, as though sitting on the ground. They are equally spaced apart and together look like a large ellipsis.

### ***Untitled (O Small Small Head)***

1989/1991

Acrylic and latex paint on wall

#### **Visual Description:**

A dappled bubblegum-pink rectangle floats slightly below the center of the left side of a large, curved white wall. At the center of the pink rectangle, handwritten, uneven black script reads:

*O Small Small Head*

*Beautiful Brown Bead*

*Pink White Orb*

*Speak!*

## ***Childhood Calling***

2020/2023

Acrylic and latex paint on wall

### **Visual Description:**

A long blue and green rectangle sits flush right and slightly below the center of a large, curved white wall. The rectangle is divided horizontally, with sky blue on top and dark grass green on the bottom. The uneven line where the two colors meet runs across the entire rectangle to make it look like a landscape. Over this background, handwritten black cursive letters form the following text, with the last two words falling toward the bottom right corner:

*Childhood Calling*

*Take Me Back*

*When The Leaves Were Always*

*Magic And Everything*

*Be*

*True*

## ***Words At Play: Cat Tongue***

2020/2023

Acrylic and latex paint on wall

### **Visual Description:**

The left edge of a large white wall is filled with a large bubblegum-pink circular shape filling the space from floor to ceiling.

In the top left corner, *Cat Tongue* is written in black cursive letters.

Below the title, in capitalized, choppy black letters, text reads:

*SIT BY MY TONGUE  
BEAUTIFUL ONE,  
I'LL TELL YOU  
WHAT THE BLUEBIRDS  
UNSAY*

*SIT BY MY TONGUE  
LOVELY ONE,  
WHAT HAPPENS IN THE NIGHT  
I'LL BETRAY*

*SIT BY MY TONGUE  
SPECIAL ONE,  
LET'S RAMBLE  
ON A MIDNIGHT MOONRAY*



***The Law Of Status\* And A Nonpareil Cat (\*Thorstein Veblen 1899)***

2018

Acrylic and latex paint on wall

**Visual Description:**

Centered on a large white wall, scrawled black letters of various sizes read:

*THE LAW OF STATUS  
IS  
THE  
DOMINANT FEATURE  
IN  
THE  
SCHEME OF LIFE*

Below the text, close to the floor, is a drawing of a solid bright-red cat outlined in mustard yellow. It has long, thick black whiskers and a thin black mouth, and it wears circular black sunglasses.

## ***Goodbye Edward Hopper***

2019/2023

Acrylic paint on wall

### **Visual Description:**

Large slanted black text in the upper right corner of a large white wall reads:

*GOODBYE EDWARD HOPPER*

The text looks as though its letters are floating up and away.

## ***M3 (In Life, Money)***

2019/2023

Acrylic and latex paint on wall

### **Visual Description:**

Large graffiti-style block letters read “M3.” The letters are gold, with thick black outlines, and are filled with drawn designs. They take up the left half of a large, curved white wall and reach from the floor almost to the ceiling. The “M” casts a deep black shadow. The top left point of the “M” is marked by a swirl, like the capital of an ancient Greek column, and the top right point of the “M” is shaped like the crenellation of a castle’s tower. The lower half of the “M” is filled with scratched diagonal black lines of different thicknesses and degrees of sharpness. The “3” is slightly smaller than the “M” and floats at the wall’s midpoint, directly to the right of the “M.” The “3” has a wiggly, curved outline, and its top reaches up like flames; partially filled black circles cover it.

***Butterfly Incantation (Polygonia Comma, Polygonia Interrogationis,  
Plebejus Melissa Samuelis)***

2020/2023

Acrylic paint on wall

**Visual Description:**

At the center of a large white wall, thin, scratchy capitalized letters read:

*POLYGONIA COMMA*

*POLYGONIA INTERROGATIONIS*

*PLEBEJUS MELISSA SAMUELIS*

The words are arranged in the shape of butterfly, with the text scrunched together at the center and fanning out on the right and left like wings. From left to right, the letters are in three colors: The first two “P”s are red, the third “P” is blue, and the rest of the text is black.

### ***Everyday Infinity***

2020/2023

Acrylic paint on wall

#### **Visual Description:**

Large capitalized black script approximately a foot and a half high fills the center of a white wall. It reads:

*EVERYDAY INFINITY*

### ***Bloom Constellation***

2022/2023

Acrylic paint on wall

#### **Visual Description:**

A large black circle sits at the center of a large white wall. Light blue marks are present at the center of the circle, seemingly scratched into the black and messily making up the letters B L O O M.

## ***Grit***

2022/2023

Acrylic paint on wall

### **Visual Description:**

The black outline of a set of gritted teeth fills the center of the left half of a large curved, white wall.

## ***Kiss***

2022/2023

Acrylic paint on wall

### **Visual Description:**

Three long black curvy lines intersect vertically on a large, curved white wall. The lines suggest the meeting point of two faces joined in a kiss.

## ***Samba To The Reckoning***

2022/2023

Acrylic paint on wall

### **Visual Description:**

Across the middle of a long, curved white wall, large curvy black letters read:

SAMBA TO THE RECKONING

***Words At Play: A Circle Thing (Thoreau, Thoreau, Thoreau . . .) #2***

2018/2023

Acrylic and latex paint on wall

**Visual Description:**

A bright sky-blue circle reaches from ceiling to floor on a long, curved white wall, with its top and bottom cut off. At the center of the circle, black text reads:

THOREAU, THOREAU, THOREAU . . .  
CIRCLE SAILING.  
WHITMAN SPARKLES FROM THE WHEEL  
WHERE ARE WE GOING ?  
WHERE DO WE COME FROM ?  
LIFE—A COLOR FILM, REAL.

SAM SPADE CONVEYED  
WHAT SHAKESPEARE SAY'D:  
US, SUCH STUFF  
AS DREAMS ARE MADE  
(THIS IS A SO-SO PARAPHRASE  
AN AWKWARD RHYME I ASSAYED)

NOW 'ROUND AND 'ROUND  
WITH YIN AND YANG  
THE INALIENABLE GLORY  
OF  
AMERICAN SLANG

THERE IS NO BEGINNING  
THERE IS NO END  
THIS HEAVENLY SHAPE  
IS ALL BEND

O CAPITAL OF CAPITAL  
WHAT WOULD ORPHAN ANNIE SAY:

WHY IS AN OREO COOKIE  
NOT MADE IN THE U.S. OF A. ?

OH LETTER O  
IN THE KNOW AND NO  
OF ZERO I SING!  
JONI OPINED  
ON THE MERRY-GO-ROUND OF TIME  
IT'S ALL A CIRCLE THING.  
P.S. PROTEUS AND THE RING . . .







Image credit:

**Jessica Diamond**

***The Law Of Status\* And A Nonpareil Cat (\*Thorstein Veblen 1899) (detail)***

2018

Acrylic and latex paint on wall

Dimensions variable

Edition: 1/3 + 1 AP

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