

## Ellen Gallagher

Ellen Gallagher was born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1965, and lives and works in New York and Rotterdam, Holland. She attended Oberlin College and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Repetition and revision are central to Gallagher's treatment of advertisements that she appropriates from popular magazines like *Ebony*, *Our World*, and *Sepia* and uses in works like *eXelento* (2004) and *DeLuxe* (2004-05).

Initially, Gallagher was drawn to the wig advertisements because of their grid-like structure. Later she realized that it was the accompanying language that attracted her, and she began to bring these narratives into her paintings making them function through the characters of the advertisements as a kind of chart of lost worlds. Although the work has often been interpreted strictly as an examination of race, Gallagher also suggests a more formal reading with respect to materials, processes, and insistences. From afar, the work appears abstract and minimal.

Upon closer inspection, googly eyes, reconfigured wigs, tongues, and lips of minstrel caricatures multiply in detail. Gallagher has been influenced by the sublime aesthetics of Agnes Martin's paintings as well the subtle shifts and repetitions of Gertrude Stein's writing. In her earlier works, Gallagher glued pages of penmanship paper onto stretched canvas and then drew and painted on it.

In *Watery Ecstatic* (2002-04), she literally carved images into thick watercolor paper in her own version of scrimshaw, from which emerge images of the sea creatures from *Drexciya*, a mythical underwater Black Atlantis.

Gallagher received the American Academy Award in Art and a Joan Mitchell Foundation Fellowship. Solo exhibitions include the Whitney Museum of American Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami; St. Louis Art Museum; Des Moines Art Center; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; and ICA Boston.

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