# Rachel Jones breaks art world norms with vibrant new Dulwich exhibition



Rachel Jones is immersed in her creative process, grappling with oversized canvases that stand as tall as the ceiling in her East London studio. As she manoeuvres the vibrant artworks covered in swaths of unpainted linen, bright blue patches, and splashes of neon yellow, she regrets positioning them upside down. But this small setback is a reflection of her unconventional artistic journey—a process that allows for mistakes and revelations alike.

The canvases represent a segment of her Gated Canyons series, featuring a fresh motif of an open mouth with a pronounced tongue, which, according to Jones, embodies a surge of energy and intensity. “There’s an idea of something quite energetic or intense happening in the activity of the painting,” she explains. This work is set to be highlighted at the Dulwich Picture Gallery, just one of many significant opportunities marking a remarkable trajectory for Jones since her graduation from the Royal Academy Schools in 2019.

Jones’ career has steadily gained momentum, beginning when the Tate acquired one of her pieces, securing her place in the realm of contemporary art. In the years that followed, her unstretched canvases were prominently featured in major exhibitions like the Hayward Gallery’s survey of contemporary painting, culminating in a breathtaking auction sale that saw her work fetch £910,000—a staggering leap from its pre-sale estimate of £40,000 to £60,000. This surge in recognition is punctuated by her enticing decision to leave the well-regarded Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery in 2023 to pursue a more independent path, a choice that speaks volumes about her ambition and vision.

Unlike many artists who might cling to established galleries, Jones has opted for an unconventional route, demonstrating a desire to break free from traditional commercial confines. She has expressed a profound commitment to presenting her works to wider audiences rather than confining art within a “Mayfair-gallery-going audience.” Her move seems driven by a longing for creative freedom—an impulse bolstered by her impressive portfolio that includes an opera based on Gwendolyn Brooks’s novel and designing the artwork for the 2024 Brit Awards.

Her upbringing significantly shapes her artistic perspective. Growing up in Brentwood, Essex, the daughter of an IT professional and a journalist, Jones initially envisioned a future in animation. However, a transformative summer programme in New York shifted her focus to fine art, leading her to study at the Glasgow School of Art. Far from wanting to be constrained by the traditional narrative of a gallery representation, she has transitioned into crafting works that resonate on personal and communal levels.

Jones’s creations challenge conventional artistic forms, often blurring the borders between abstraction and figuration. Jane Findlay, curator of the Dulwich exhibition, observed this distinctly visceral nature in her work after experiencing it at Chisenhale Gallery in 2022. “I was blown away by it,” she recalls, noting that Jones expresses emotions typically left unvoiced, and promotes a sense of movement—both in the process of creation and viewing.

The upcoming exhibition at Dulwich Picture Gallery broadens her artistic vocabulary, as she draws inspiration not just from pop culture references like Looney Tunes and Disney, but also from classic works, including Pieter Boel’s Head of a Hound from the 17th century. This intersection of the historic and the contemporary signifies her evolution towards producing work that not only resonates with her but invites an engaged audience.

Of paramount importance to Jones is how viewers interact with her art. She meticulously chooses the orientation and height at which her work is displayed, aiming to create an experience that encourages viewers to engage both physically and mentally with the pieces. Despite her keen interest in how art is perceived, she remains reluctant to dictate interpretations, stating, “As much as people want me to speak for the work, that isn’t my job.”

Moreover, the freedom that comes with her artistic journey means she relishes diverse reactions from her audience, from intrigue to discomfort. She recounts a moment when a curator found one of her vibrant pieces overwhelmingly intense, highlighting her satisfaction in producing work that evokes visceral responses.

In her creative philosophy, Jones sees a painting as finished when it feels “good enough,” alluding to the notion of a continuous journey rather than a definitive endpoint. “There’s got to be a sense for me that something else could be done,” she muses, capturing her instinctual push towards exploration and innovation.

With her Gated Canyons exhibition at the Dulwich Picture Gallery commencing on 10 June, Rachel Jones stands on the cusp of embracing her next chapter—one filled with dynamic experimentation and lots of room for growth.

### Reference Map

1. Lead article on Rachel Jones
2. Context on her artistic evolution and success
3. Insights about her departure from Thaddaeus Ropac and broader artistic ambitions
4. Details on the Dulwich exhibition and its themes

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.ft.com/content/8f8b7220-8d39-4856-b491-d794dbe354ff> - Please view link - unable to able to access data