



First Place  
Pamela Jennings

Brooklyn, N.Y. • [www.pamjenningsart.com](http://www.pamjenningsart.com)

# Abstract Experimental

1,026 ENTRIES • 85 FINALISTS

HAVING EARNED AN MFA AT BROOKLYN College and graduate and postgraduate degrees from George Washington University and the Baltimore Washington Institute for Psychoanalysis, Pamela Jennings embarked on a private practice in Washington, D.C. where she often administered the Rorschach inkblot test. “No matter why clients required assessment—because of sadness or rage, anxiety or psychosis—the imagery of the Rorschach,” Jennings says, “was always a bit magical; it made them briefly forget their troubles.”

The black inkblot on white ground with its indeterminate imagery and bilateral symmetry would influence her artwork years later. In spite of its lighthearted title, *2's Comp'ny, 3's a Crowd* has a grave affect due to its ambiguous imagery suggestive of both flaying and fire.

The triptych unites works from the artist's *Natural Effects* series, which pays homage to the ancient Chinese painter Sung Ti's practice of combining what he imagined with what he observed. Working with acrylic on silk crepe, Jennings intends to simulate the random effects that occur when rain dries on silk. The resulting images seem both imprinted and erased, as if discovered rather than devised. Indeed, Jennings prefers to proceed without preconceptions.

“A paint brush is too controlling of where the paint does and does not go,” she says. Instead, she pours and sprays acrylic so that it seems to “rain” on silk canvases. She starts with the lightest value and works her way to



the darkest, then “unpaints” by washing out layers. “You can literally see the record of this process,” she says, “because the final flow of the washes is observable in the patterns they make. I constantly read the visual imagery and stop the process when I intuit that I have a functional piece that is evocative.”

As for the unrelated colors of the backgrounds and the differing intervals between parts of the triptych, she says: “I saw the first two pieces (on the left) as perfectly matched. They seemed to complete one another, which was a nice-enough visual story, but the third part added soul (“3's a Crowd”). Suddenly there was the heartfelt pain of exclusion.”

Jennings played with a variety of



combinations until deciding to reinforce the title's point by elongating the distance between the two matched panels and the third outlier, which provides dimensionality by seeming to come forward, while the other two panels are as if seen through glass, recessed.

As a precocious child in Harlem (she sewed a leather jacket in third grade), Jennings had imagined a career in fashion design. Now that she has retired, for the most part, from clinical practice, she has returned to New York City. "My life, as fulfilling as it was in psychology and psychoanalysis, was not complete without art; in striving to be whole, I had to integrate art into my life, much as I integrated the three pieces of *2's Comp'ny, 3's a Crowd*."

**ABOVE: *2's Comp'ny, 3's a Crowd*** (acrylic and paper on silk crepe, 135x210)