

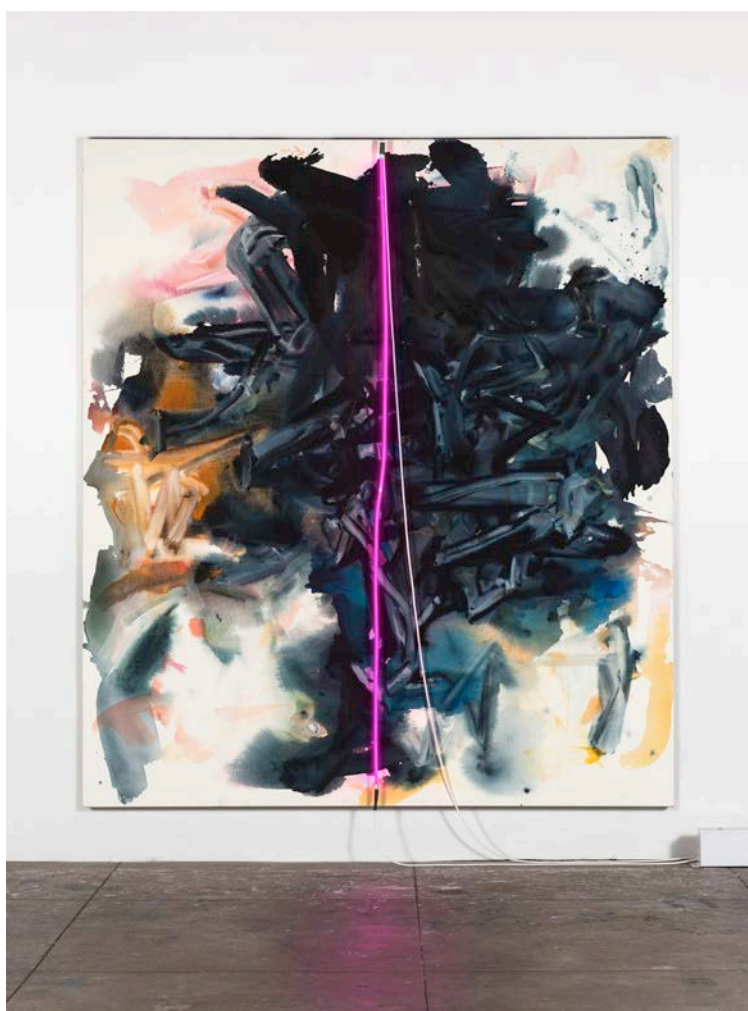
Ebony, David, "Mary Weatherford," *Art in America*, October 2015

## Art in America

# Mary Weatherford

NEW YORK,  
at Brennan & Griffin

by David Ebony



Mary Weatherford: *past Sunset*, 2015, Flashe and neon light on linen, 112 by 99 inches; at Brennan & Griffin.

A selection of eight sprawling paint-and-neon-light canvases by Mary Weatherford was an inspired choice for inaugurating this Lower East Side gallery's cavernous new satellite space in the Red Hook neighborhood of Brooklyn. In preparation for the show, titled "Mary Weatherford: Red Hook," the Los Angeles artist, who lived in New York in the 1990s, returned to the city for several months to study this once-thriving port on New York Harbor. It's a procedure she frequently adopts in anticipation of an exhibition in a new space.

Produced over the past two years, the works on view—literally luminous abstract compositions—can be seen as following the course of a day, from sunrise to sunset, in the midst of an industrial urban setting. The colors and textures of the works indicate the shifting light, atmosphere and mood that she observed during her visit. The all-over compositions contain exuberant brushstrokes that never quite reach the edges of the canvas, which are typically left blank. A thin tube or two of neon lighting, usually oriented vertically or horizontally, punctuate each canvas, the wiring and transformer plainly visible.

Using Flashe, a vinyl-based paint offering a wide variety of nuanced textures—from a watercolorlike translucence to a velvety matte feel—Weatherford evokes the nearby Hudson and East rivers with vibrant splashes of blues, ranging from pale aquamarine to steely blue-gray. Always complementing rather than fighting the painted surfaces, the glowing tubes suggest different times of day, while also providing an allusion to commercial signage in the urban environment.

A piece such as *dawn Channel* might be viewed as marking the beginning of the cycle, with two red neon tubes in a "V" shape traversing the canvas. The work, indeed, dramatically conveys the warm glow of morning light as it illuminates a sleepy harbor. At the other end of the cycle, *past Sunset* features a vertical tube of bright pink neon down the center of the canvas. It promises the soothing calm of the evening as well as a hot night on the town.

The excitement of Weatherford's work stems from such unexpected associations, and also from the contradictory nature of her chosen materials. Her use of neon lighting as a kind of drawing in space often recalls works by Keith Sonnier. The lights, however, somehow serve to restrain Weatherford's painting sensibility, which is fundamentally romantic and unabashedly allied with late AbEx and Color Field compositions, especially the Veils of Morris Louis, which she has acknowledged as an influence. Over the past decade or so, Weatherford has refined this hybrid form, fusing the realms of painting and installation in a unique way. Her aims have never been better realized than in this exhibition inspired by the shifting light of an industrial neighborhood.