

Steiner, Rochelle, "Mary Weatherford," *Vitamin P3: New Perspective in Painting*, London and New York: Phaidon, 2016, pp. 320-323

California native Mary Weatherford has been called a landscape painter, but she is emphatic that she does not work in this tradition. Because many of her paintings are titled after places – including Los Angeles, Bakersfield, Manhattan and Coney Island – they have been interpreted as visual depictions of those sites, albeit in abstract forms. Weatherford characterizes her art as situational and experiential, based on her interest in capturing the sublime aspects within everyday moments and events that she finds rooted in urban encounters. Her imagery is not grounded in representation or memory as much as in what she calls a complex imaginary experience of a situation – a fantasy or reimagining of a moment in time and space.

Weatherford sees her work as being about her experiences – the situations and people she encounters – on the street, at the beach and as part of her daily comings and goings. *Double Wave at Windansea* (2015) for example, was inspired by an event in San Diego, during a high tide swell, when the ocean was full of body surfers and boogie boarders. She recounts how she went, saw, experienced the episode, came home and made the painting. As such, she considers this work to be about that particular moment in time, rather than about the landscape or that genre of painting. Likewise, *The River* (2015) conveys her experience one day at the Los Angeles River, where she witnessed a man undress, neatly fold up his clothes, go into the water, bathe, get out and re-dress – a situation she has reimagined as a local version of bathing in the Ganges, about which she has remarked, 'You never know who the Buddha is.'

Weatherford lived on the east coast of America for twenty years, and her early work was influenced by her time spent in Manhattan in the 1980s – where she had a studio in the East Village – trips to Coney Island, wanderings through Chinatown, and evening views of the illuminated Empire State Building. Because her work is often about certain moments in the day, featuring summer skies and urban lights, the paintings seem embedded with references to weather as a marker of the conditions of a place or situation. These encounters are offered to others through her paintings as universal conditions or concerns.

In 2012 Weatherford began incorporating neon into her paintings, a material that embodies her experience of and ideas about the lights and movement within cities. The first group of paintings to include neon was inspired by driving through the small city of Bakersfield, California at night, past an array of illuminated signs on shops, bars, pharmacies and other city sites. For all its ubiquity, neon remains a handmade product, fabricated uniquely by craftspeople. Taking its place on her canvases, the neon tubes function as three-dimensional lines of light that are always slightly crooked and imperfect, creating neither legible shapes, letters or words. By pointing to the external world, the neon takes these works beyond the interiority of abstract painting, without ultimately being a representation of anything other than itself – an addition of colour and light to the canvas.

– Rochelle Steiner

MARY WEATHERFORD Born 1962, Ojai, CA. Lives and works in Los Angeles. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2015 – 'Redhook', Brennan & Griffin, New York; 2014 – 'The Color of the Air', Careyes Art Space, Careyes, Mexico; 'Los Angeles', David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; 2011 – 'Cave at Pismo', Brennan & Griffin, New York. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Nice Weather', Skarstedt Gallery, New York; 2015 – 'No Man's Land: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection', Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL; 2014 – 'The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in a Atemporal World', The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Selected Bibliography: 2015 – Roberta Smith, "'Pretty Raw' Recounts Helen Frankenthaler's Influence on the Art World", *The New York Times*, Jun; 2014 – Maxwell Williams, 'Mary Weatherford: L.A. Confidential', *Art in America*, May; 2012 – Barry Schwabsky, 'Mary Weatherford', *Artforum*, Dec.



1.



2.

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3.

1. Engine, 2014
Flashe and neon on linen
297.2 x 264.2 cm / 117 x 104 in
2. Canyon, 2014
Flashe and neon on linen
284.5 x 251.5 cm / 112 x 99 in
3. Double Wave at Windansea, 2015
Flashe and neon on linen
284.5 x 251.5 cm / 112 x 99 in

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4. The River, 2015
Fluorescence and neon on linen
198.1 x 308.6 cm / 78 x 121 1/2 in



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