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Jennifer Guidi with a new painting for her solo show at Almine Rech in March.

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SAND STORM

Sifting through the grit of Jennifer Guidi's soulful abstractions.

BY KATY DIAMOND HAMER PORTRAIT BY LONDON NORDEMAN

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With an early career rooted in representational painting

in what might best be described as her past life, L.A.-based artist Jennifer Guidi made a radical move towards abstraction in 2012. "It was hard and took many years to make that transition," says Guidi. "It took a long time to feel comfortable by not painting an image or feeling that something like that was OK." Of course, changing patterns or habits in the way that one makes a picture isn't easy and Guidi, who will make her solo debut at Almine Rech in New York on March 2, observed that she often made work in private as a means of developing her current style. Prior to delving into abstraction, the 44-year-old artist was painting people, plants, interiors and insects.

"I was working on a series of paintings of spiders which were very colorful and more about their patterns breaking them down into shapes," Guidi recalls of her last representational works. "I was scared of spiders and had this idea of facing fears head on. I didn't want to paint from photographs anymore or from life, I really wanted to make my own paintings. I didn't want it to be an object."

As part of her new process Guidi commences with an underpainting and then applies thick layers of colored sand onto the canvas. Using a sharpened, long wooden dowel, she moves along the surface making impressions pressing the point of the instrument into the soft, tinted sand. On the heels of shows at London's Massimo De Carlo and Harper's Apartment in New York, Guidi recently joined the roster at David Kordansky Gallery in Los Angeles.

"For me, Jennifer's compositions are quintessential West Coast pictures—mandala-like meditations on atmosphere that capture the ambiance of where the sky meets the sea," says Kordansky. "In this age of fast images and technology, Jennifer's work offers viewers incredibly poetic opportunities to slow down and lose themselves in the pleasures of looking."

Having always worked in a slow meditative way even when painting the figure, she builds her grounds slowly by pouring and dabbing at the surface, employing ancient tools, methodologies and the mind-body experience to drift away from the digital by making weighted sand paintings that resemble relics or artifacts. Periodically, a narrative landscape can reemerge in her work but almost as if witnessed through fog. At Harper's Apartment, several of the canvases emanated color-blocked light seemingly on a lake during a sunset. For Almine Rech, Guidi will continue to explore these themes in both large and smaller canvases using singular color gradations as well as multi-colored surfaces that allow one to imagine what it might feel like to touch or walk across the surface, symbolically entering each groove.

"The new work is less serial and more experimental," says Guidi. "I'm using more variation in colors and also revisiting the landscape." Changing incrementally but changing nonetheless, Guidi's work continues to unearth the otherworldly, while remaining completely grounded.



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