DAVID
KORDANSKY
GALLERY

Mary Weatherford

Mountains Mud Prisms Air

November 13, 2021 – January 8, 2022

Exhibition Binder

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David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present Mountains Mud Prisms Air, an exhibition of new paintings by Mary Weatherford that will include her largest works to date, as well as paintings both with and without neon tubing. Occupying the gallery's north and south exhibition spaces, the show will be on view November 13, 2021 – January 8, 2022. An opening reception will take place on Saturday, November 13 from 6 – 8 PM.

Following on the heels of Canyon–Daisy–Eden, a 2020 mid-career retrospective organized by the Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College and recently on view at SITE Santa Fe, as well as a major exhibition in 2020-21 at the Aspen Art Museum, Mountains Mud Prisms Air finds Weatherford expanding the boundaries of her vision on all fronts. Every element of the painting process has been considered and challenged, with support, scale, format, physicality, color, and content subject to reinvention and reimagination.

Notable in this regard are the monumental, mural-sized works that anchor the show, and that have been executed on seamless pieces of Belgian linen produced on a specialized loom commissioned by the artist. Weatherford uses this vast support and swooping brushwork to generate fields of high-key color brushwork informed by recent trips to Hawaii. Encounters with the islands' weather, light, flora, fauna, and geology animate all of the paintings in the exhibition as well as its title, which hints at the broad array of sensorial and poetic perceptions Weatherford navigates as she brings each composition from experiential intuition to physical reality.

While Mountains Mud Prisms Air is charged with a sense of place, each picture is an all-over excursion in which the canvas has been explored to the limits of its four edges; there are no horizon lines or other signifiers of traditional spatial orientation. The works are instead indicative of experiences of full-body participation in which sights, sounds, and smells—as well as memories and dreams—constitute a fluid, synesthetic impression of reality. This is what makes Weatherford's abstraction groundbreaking: time and again she risks the plunge into a chaotic pool of external and internal data, only to surface bearing

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pictures of reality that are no less faithful for being non-objective, and that communicate their intensities and doubts, their pleasures and perturbations, to a wide range of viewers.

The neon tubes that have characterized Weatherford's work for the last decade appear on some of the canvases included here, often in provocative new permutations, but they are notable for their presence and absence alike. The urgent luminosity of the tubes has migrated into her palette; even the paintings without neon possess newfound clarity and forthrightness of color, reminders that seeing is a bodily phenomenon in which the eyes register palpable energy. Though no black is used in any of the works, such prismatic effects are nonetheless offset by passages rendered in earthy registers that give the brighter colors weight and create the impression that they have grown organically from the metaphorical "soil" of the chromatic spectrum.

Like all of her work, the paintings in Mountains Mud Prisms Air are the results of a multi-faceted process that begins and ends outside the studio but reaches its most intensive phases within it. Working on the floor, Weatherford lays down pools of pigment and medium that in turn become sites for expressive mark-making. She circles the canvases, moving across them as the evolving compositions require, placing herself amidst their visual rhythms and textures in bracingly real terms. Painting, like the oceans or forests of Hawaii, provides limitless opportunities for immersion.

The exhibition features small-, medium-, and large-scale canvases in horizontal, vertical, and square formats, making it one of the most varied presentations of Weatherford's career. This gives her the freedom to experiment with the possibilities inherent to both spaciousness and compression, and to observe how several hues can coexist in a single picture plane without one exerting dominance over the others. A teeming sense of multiplicity permeates the show as a whole. It filters through to the titles of the paintings, which Weatherford invests with descriptors and details that encompass the fecund vitality of the Hawaiian natural world. The titles are no less material than the pigments, supports,

neon tubing, and fixtures with which the works are constructed. They contribute to the poetry that suffuses the show like a living spirit, forging connections to painting's past by emphasizing its present, and seeding its future with openness and wonder.

Mary Weatherford (b. 1963, Ojai, California) was recently the subject of a survey exhibition, Canyon–Daisy–Eden, which originated at the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York (2020), and traveled to SITE Santa Fe (2021). A solo exhibition of Weatherford's neon paintings was also held at the Aspen Art Museum in 2020. In addition, she has presented solo shows at the Marian Miner Cook Athenaeum, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, California (2014); Todd Madigan Gallery, California State University at Bakersfield, California (2012); and LAXART, Los Angeles (2012). Recent group exhibitions include Aftereffect: Georgia O'Keeffe and Contemporary Painting, Museum of Contemporary Art Denver (2019); Feel the Sun in Your Mouth: Recent Acquisitions, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (2019); Between Two Worlds: Art of California, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2017); NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection, Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2015); Pretty Raw: After and Around Helen Frankenthaler, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts (2015); and The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014). Her work features in the permanent collections of many institutions, among them the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; Brooklyn Museum, New York; K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong; and Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. In 2019, Lund Humphries published an in-depth monograph surveying the artist's oeuvre. Weatherford lives and works in Los Angeles.

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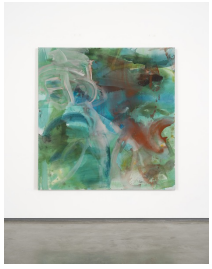
Mary Weatherford
Mountains Mud Prisms Air
November 13, 2021 - January 8, 2022

North Gallery



Mary Weatherford
Through the Trees, 2021
Flashe on linen
80 x 77 x 1 3/4 inches
(203.2 x 195.6 x 4.4 cm)
(Inv# MW 21.048)

Mary Weatherford
Signal, 2021
Flashe and neon on linen
35 x 18 x 2 3/4 inches
(88.9 x 45.7 x 7 cm)
(Inv# MW 21.052)

Mary Weatherford
Yellow Sun, 2021
Flashe on linen
66 x 58 x 1 1/4 inches
(167.6 x 147.3 x 3.2 cm)
(Inv# MW 21.038)

Mary Weatherford
The Birds of Kīlauea Point, 2021
Flashe and neon on linen
113 x 79 x 3 1/2 inches
(287 x 200.7 x 8.9 cm)
(Inv# MW 21.034)

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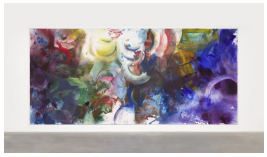


Mary Weatherford
Light Falling Like a Broken Chain; Paradise, 2021
Flashe on linen
133 x 288 x 1 5/8 inches
(337.8 x 731.5 x 4.1 cm)
(Inv# MW 21.049)

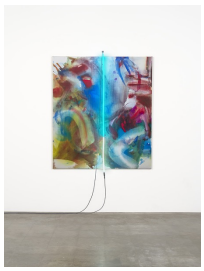
South Gallery

Mary Weatherford
Yellow Sun Far Away, 2021
Flashe on linen
66 x 58 x 1 1/8 inches
(167.6 x 147.3 x 2.9 cm)
(Inv# MW 21.040)

Mary Weatherford
Warm Weather, 2021
Flashe and neon on linen
15 x 19 1/2 x 2 3/4 inches
(38.1 x 49.5 x 7 cm)
(Inv# MW 21.058)

Mary Weatherford
Air, 2021
Flashe and neon on linen
110 1/2 x 79 x 3 1/2 inches
(280.7 x 200.7 x 8.9 cm)
(Inv# MW 21.037)

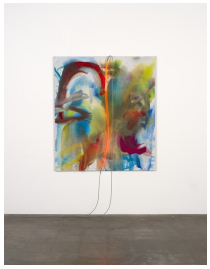
Mary Weatherford
Below the Cliff, 2021
Flashe on linen
133 x 288 x 1 5/8 inches
(337.8 x 731.5 x 4.1 cm)
(Inv# MW 21.056)



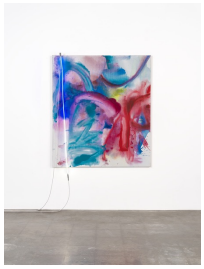
Mary Weatherford
Blue Split, 2021
Flashe and neon on linen
74 x 58 x 2 3/4 inches
(188 x 147.3 x 7 cm)
(Inv# MW 21.042)

Viewing Room

Mary Weatherford
The Reef, 2021
Flashe on linen
64 x 116 1/4 x 1 1/2 inches
(162.6 x 295.3 x 3.8 cm)
(Inv# MW 21.032)



Mary Weatherford
French Orange Citrus Split, 2021
Flashe and neon on linen
66 x 58 x 2 3/4 inches
(167.6 x 147.3 x 7 cm)
(Inv# MW 21.039)



Mary Weatherford
Trip to the Moon, 2021
Flashe and neon on linen
75 x 58 x 3 1/2 inches
(190.5 x 147.3 x 8.9 cm)
(Inv# MW 21.041)

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MARY WEATHERFORD

born 1963, Ojai, CA
lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

EDUCATION

2006 MFA, Milton Avery School of the Arts, Bard College, Annendale-on-Hudson, NY
1985 Whitney Independent Study Program, Helena Rubinstein Fellow, New York, NY
1984 BA, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS
(* indicates a publication)

2021 **Mary Weatherford: Canyon—Daisy—Eden,* SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM
Mountains Mud Prisms Air, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2020 **Mary Weatherford: Canyon—Daisy—Eden,* Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY
The Japan Drawings, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Train Yards, Gagosian, London, England
Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO

2019 *MARY WEATHERFORD,* Crown Point Press, San Francisco, CA

2018 **I've Seen Gray Whales Go By*, Gagosian, New York, NY

2017 **like the land loves the sea,* David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2015 *Red Hook*, Brennan & Griffin, New York, NY

2014 *Los Angeles*, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2012 **The Bakersfield Paintings*, LA><ART, Los Angeles, CA
Manhattan, Brennan & Griffin, New York, NY

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The Bakersfield Project, Todd Madigan Gallery, California State University at Bakersfield, Bakersfield, CA

2011 *Cave at Pismo*, Brennan & Griffin, New York, NY

2010 *The Cave*, John Tevis Gallery, Paris, France

2008 *Vines*, Sister, Los Angeles, CA
Brick Walls and Sea Life, Cottage Home, Los Angeles, CA

2007 *Paintings of a Cave*, Sister, Los Angeles, CA

2006 *Mary Weatherford*, Shane Campbell Gallery, Oak Park, IL
New Paintings, Sister, Los Angeles, CA

2003 *Mary Weatherford,* boomeditions (Shane Campbell Gallery), Chicago, IL

2000 *recent paintings*, Debs & Co., New York, NY

1998 **Easter*, Debs & Co., New York, NY

1992 *I Never Promised You A Rose Garden*, BlumHelman Warehouse, New York, NY

1991 *Swan Lake*, Marc Jancou Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland

1990 Diane Brown Gallery, New York, NY

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
(* indicates a publication)

2021 *The Beatitudes of Malibu,* David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
An Ideal Landscape, Gagosian, New York, NY

2020 *Artists for New York*, Hauser & Wirth, New York, NY
ICE AND FIRE: A Benefit Exhibition in Three Parts, The Kitchen, New York, NY
Abstraction: Between Representation and Non-Representation, Jason Haam Gallery, Seoul, Korea

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2019 *Landscapes of the Mind,* Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ
Multitudes, Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ
Feel the Sun in Your Mouth: Recent Acquisitions, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.
Against Colour Stroke Vectors, Massimo De Carlo, Milan, Italy
Continuing Abstraction, presented by Gagosian, Rheinsprung 1, Basel, Switzerland
Aftereffect: Georgia O'Keeffe and Contemporary Painting, curated by Elissa Auther, Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, Denver, CO
Dreamhouse vs Punk House (Plus Cat House), Serious Topics, Inglewood, CA
Inaugural exhibition, Rubell Museum, Miami, FL

2018 *Surface Work,* Victoria Miro, London, England
Critical Dictionary: In homage to G. Bataille, Gagosian, Paris, France
Echoes, Gagosian, San Francisco, CA

2017 *Masterworks on Loan,* curated by Miranda Callander, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR
LA Invitational, Gagosian Gallery, New York, NY
Between Two Worlds: Art of California, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA
Color People, curated by Rashid Johnson, Rental Gallery, East Hampton, NY
**Unpacking: The Marciano Collection,* curated by Philipp Kaiser, Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA
UNIQUE & SINGULAR, Cirrus, Los Angeles, CA

2016 *The Noise of Art,* curated by Mari Eastman, Soccer Club Club, Chicago, IL
Accumulations: 5,000 Years of Objects, Fictions, and Conversations, Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Amherst, MA
**NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection,* organized by the Rubell Family Collection, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.
NEON: The Charged Line, Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool, England
End Of Semester, BBQLA, Los Angeles, CA
Grafforists, curated by Max Presneill, Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, CA

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Nice Weather, organized by David Salle, Skarstedt Gallery, New York, NY

2015 *THE ANSWER. THE QUESTION,* Artist Curated Projects, Los Angeles, CA
MEAT RAFFLE, BBQLA, Los Angeles, CA
**NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL
Six Doors, curated by Rachel Foullon, The Other Room, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, New York, NY
**Pretty Raw: After and Around Helen Frankenthaler*, organized by Katy Siegel, The Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA
Pure Paint for Now People, Mary Elizabeth Dee Shaw Gallery, Webster State University, Ogden, UT

2014 **The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World,* Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
Variations: Conversations in and Around Abstract Painting, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA
**Caught Looking*, Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, CA
The Moira Dryer Project, Eleven Rivington, New York, NY

2013 *California Landscape Into Abstraction*, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA
Selections from the Grunwald Center and the Hammer Contemporary Collection, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA
CULM, organized by Sayre Gomez and JPW3, Night Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2012 *Sam Falls, Mark Hagen, James Hayward, Mary Weatherford,* China Art Objects, Los Angeles, CA
Take Shelter In The World, Boston University Art Gallery, Boston, MA

2011 *A Painting Show*, Harris Lieberman Gallery, New York, NY

2010 *LAst Show*, Cottage Home, Los Angeles, CA
Artificial Paradises, ACME, Los Angeles, CA

2009 *These Are a Few*, organized by Madeleine Hoffmann, JGM Galerie, Paris, France

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The Ballad that Becomes an Anthem, organized by Stephen Westfall, ACME., Los Angeles, CA

2008 **California Biennial 2008*, organized by Lauri Firstenberg, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA

2007 *Something About Mary*, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA

2006 *Hotel California*, Glendale College Art Gallery, Glendale, CA
The Trace of a Trace of a Trace, Perry Rubenstein Gallery, New York, NY

2004 *Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?*, organized by Katherine Berhardt, Champion Fine Art, Los Angeles, CA
Eastman, Weatherford & Arnold, Daniel Hug Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2003 *Still or Sparkling*, organized by Nancy Chaikin, John Connelly Presents, New York, NY

2002 *Simmer*, organized by Ciara Ennis, Echo Park Projects, Los Angeles, CA
New Angeles, The Ewing Gallery, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

2001 *New Angeles*, organized by Bill Conger, University Galleries, Illinois State University, Normal, IL
Sharing Sunsets, organized by Julie Deamer, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson, AZ
Chicagoprojectroom and Laura Owens' studio, organized by Laura Owens, Los Angeles, CA

2000 *as i love you you become more pretty*, organized by Karin Gulbran, 937 N. Hudson, Los Angeles, CA

1999 *Stars of Track and Field*, Debs & Co., New York, NY
Life in Space, a Three Day Weekend event at CCAC, San Francisco, CA
a ball and a bat, organized by Michael St. John, Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland, OR
**OM*, organized by Joe Fyfe, Dorsky Gallery, New York, NY

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1998 *Bowie*, Rupert Goldsworthy Gallery, New York, NY
Little, Jeffrey Coploff Fine Art Ltd., New York, NY

1997 *Very Large Array,* Debs & Co., New York, NY
Primarily Paint, Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA

1994 *Don't Postpone Joy, or Collecting can be Fun*, organized by Rudi Molacek, Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz and The Austrian Institute, New York, NY

1993 *The Return of the Cadavre Exquis*, The Drawing Center, New York, NY

1992 **Postcards from Alphaville*: *Jean Luc Godard in Contemporary Art, 1963-1992,* P.S. 1, Long Island City, NY
Painting Culture, University of California at Irvine Fine Arts Gallery, Irvine, CA
**The Real Thing,* organized by Eric Oppenheim, New York, NY

1991 *Synthesis*, John Good Gallery, New York, NY
Hybrid Abstract, organized by Joshua Decter, Usdan Gallery, Bennington College, Bennington, VT
Lyric: Uses of Beauty at the End of the Century, White Columns, New York, NY
Painting Culture, organized by Deb Kass, fiction/nonfiction, New York, NY
Plastic Fantastic Lover (object a), BlumHelman Warehouse, New York, NY

1990 **Emerging Art 1990: Commodities Corporation Collection*, New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, NJ
To Know a Hawk from a Handsaw, Wolff Gallery, New York, NY
**Stendahl Syndrome: The Cure*, Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York, NY
**New Directions*, organized by Sam Hunter, S. Bitter Larkin Gallery, New York, NY
Information, organized by Robert Nickas, Terrain Gallery, San Francisco, CA
About Round/Round About, Anders Tornberg Gallery, Lund, Sweden

1989 *Drawings*, Wolff Gallery, New York, NY

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Special Projects, P.S.1, Institute for Art and Urban Resources, Long Island City, New York, NY

1986 *Indoor /Outdoor*, El Bohio, New York, NY

GRANTS AND AWARDS

2020 2020 Aspen Award

2014 Artists' Legacy Foundation Award
Artist in Residence, Careyes Foundation

2009 The Durfee Foundation ARC Grant

2008 California Community Foundation Palevsky Fellowship for Visual Artists

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
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2021 **Canyon—Daisy—Eden*, with texts by Bill Arning, Ian Berry, Dale Peck, Rebecca Morris, Margaret Weatherford, Elissa Auther, and Arnold J. Kemp, featuring a conversation between Mary Weatherford and Ian Berry, Saratoga Springs: Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, 2021
**Abstract Art: A Global History*, by Pepe Karmel, London: Thames & Hudson, 2021, pp. 123, 131
**The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Philosophy*, edited by Kim Q. Hall and Ásta, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021, cover
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"Previews," *Frieze*, October 2021, pp. 205-208
"The Art Show Returns Alongside the Launch of an Online Hub," *ArtandObject.com*, October 29, 2021
"New York's ADAA Art Show Opens Next Week at Park Avenue Armory and Online," *ArtFixDaily.com*, October 27, 2021
Ryder, Winona, "For the love of art," *FloridaNewsTimes.com*," October 27, 2021

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Selvin, Claire, “Why Joint Acquisitions May Be the Way Forward for Cash-Strapped Museums,” *ARTnews.com*, September 23, 2021
Durón, Maximilíano, “9 Sales Highlights from This Year’s Art Basel in Switzerland,” *ARTnews.com*, September 22, 2021
Bagley, Christopher, “In David Kordansky and Mindy Shapero’s Home, Art Always Comes First,” *W Magazine*, September, 2021, pp. 72-79
Durón, Maximilíano, “L.A. Dealer David Kordansky to Open New York Space Next Year,” *ARTnews.com*, September 30, 2021
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Schneider, Tim, “The Back Room: Rocky Mountain High,” *news.artnet.com,* August 6, 2021
Kazakina, Katya, “‘You Go Where the Money Is’: How Wealthy Collectors Led Top Art Dealers to Aspen, the Industry’s Newest Haven,” *news.artnet.com*, August 5, 2021
Griffin, Jonathan, “The Artistic Evolution of Mary Weatherford,” *Frieze.com,* July 5, 2021
Brara, Noor, “Artists on Artists to Watch, and Maybe Even Collect,” *NYTimes.com*, June 14, 2021
“The Beatitudes of Malibu,” *LAReviewofBooks.org*, June 14 2021
Roberts, Kathleen, “Unsatisfied in the greatest way,” *news.yahoo.com*, June 13, 2021
De Vore, Alex, “Summer Museum Mayhem,” *SFReporter.com*, June 2, 2021
Finkel, Jori, “Inside Klaus Biesenbach’s Unique Los Angeles Home,” *WMagazine.com*, April 22, 2021
Boucher, Brian, “How New York’s Galleries Have Survived and Thrived During the Pandemic,” *ARTnews.com*, April 5, 2021
Travers, Andrew, “Strokes of Neon: Aspen Art Museum showcases Mary Weatherford’s ‘Neon Paintings’,” *AspenTimes.com*, February 4, 2021
O’Grady, Janet, “Aspen’s Bustling Arts and Culture Scene Thrives Amid the Pandemic,” *ArchitecturalDigest.com*, February 2, 2021
Suhrawardi, Rebecca, “Fashion, Art, And Aprés: How To Enjoy Aspen Safely,” *Forbes.com*, February 1, 2021
“Melancholy in Black and Neon,” *Hyperallergic.com*, January 9, 2021

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2020 Donoghue, Katy, “David Kordansky Expands L.A. Space,” *Whitewaller*, Up Close, issue 31, 2020, pp. 36-37
Rus, Mayer, “Step Inside This Meticulously Restored Midcentury Modern Masterpiece,” *ADMiddleEast.com*, November 18, 2020
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Westwall, Mark, “Mary Weatherford Train Yards,” *FadMagazine.com*, September 21, 2020
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Greenberger, Alex, “Mary Weatherford Revisits a 1957 ARTnews Profile of Painter Joan Mitchell,” *ARTnews.com*, September 4, 2020
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2019 **like the land loves the sea*, with a text by Phyllis Tuchman, Los Angeles: David Kordansky Gallery, 2019
**Mary Weatherford*, written by Suzanne Hudson, London: Lund Humphries, 2019
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NOAH BECKER'S WHITEHOT MAGAZINE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

The Best of The Art Show 2021

By Paul Laster | November 2021

Presenting a lively selection of contemporary and modernist artworks by an international mix of artists, the 2021 edition of The Art Show kicked off to a packed house of collector, curators and critics on Wednesday evening at the Park Avenue Armory in New York. Organized by the Art Dealers Association of America (ADAA), the beloved art fair features 72 member galleries from across the United States. With 40 exhibitors offering solos shows and many others presenting rare and never-before-seen works, this year’s fair delight the eye while providing plenty of food for thought.

Modernist highlights included a superb selection of abstract paintings and sculptures by Dada pioneer Jean Arp at Michael Werner, paintings and works on paper by Surrealist painter and poet Dorothea Tanning at Gallery Wendi Norris and mystical watercolors by self-taught Argentinian artist Xul Solar at Sicardi | Ayers | Bacino, while amongst the contemporary standout presentations were abstract expressionist paintings and collages by Korean American painter Wook-Kyung Choi at Tina Kim Gallery, colorful AfriCOBRA works by Jae Jarrell and Wadsworth Jarrell at Jenkins Johnson Gallery and dynamic textile weavings at Garth Greenan Gallery by Native American artist Melissa Cody.

Scroll through the images below to see our favorite pieces, in a variety of mediums, from this year’s show.

Fred Eversley and Mary Weatherford at David Kordansky Gallery

"Previews," *Frieze*, October 2021, pp. 205-208

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PREVIEWS

Painting shows to look forward to this autumn/winter

RACHEL JONES
Thaddaeus Ropac, London, UK

Jones has been painting mouths and teeth since 2019, developing the motif during a residency at the Chinati Foundation, Marfa, which she attended while completing her MA at the Royal Academy of Arts, London. The artist's most recent series, 'lick your teeth, they so clutch' (2020–21), on show at Thaddeus Ropac this November and in Hayward Gallery's 'Mixing It Up: Painting Today' until December, sees her continuing to explore the mouth as a space for Black interiority, while wielding her brush more audaciously. The meanings behind Jones's images lie latent, inducing a kind of hypnagogic half-recognition in the viewer. By continuing to explore the mouth, and veering away from figurative representation, Jones deepens her focus on Black subjectivity.

Rachel Jones's exhibition will be on view in November.

Sutapa Biswas, *Housewives with Steak-Knives*, 1983–85, oil, acrylic, pastel, pencil, white tape, collage on paper onto stretched canvas, 2.5×2.2 m

SUTAPA BISWAS
Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, UK

Housewives with Steak-Knives (1984–85) by Sutapa Biswas depicts the demonic goddess Kali brandishing – you've guessed it – a humongous steak knife. Pinned to her dress are the faces of tyrannical dictators and, in one of her four hands, she carries a dead man's head. Biswas set about challenging and decolonizing British art from the moment she set foot in the University of Leeds as a student in 1981 – and she hasn't stopped since. A forthcoming exhibition titled 'Lumen' at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, will bring together works in painting, drawing, sculpture, photography and video from across the artist's career. The exhibition is a companion to Biswas's current show at BALTIC, Gateshead, which closes in March 2022, and foregrounds her contribution to the Black Arts Movement in Britain.

'Sutapa Biswas: Lumen' will be on view 16 October – 30 January 2022.

Rachel Jones, *lick your teeth, they so clutch*, 2021, oil pastel, oil stick on canvas, 2.5×1.5 m

MARY WEATHERFORD
David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, USA

Mary Weatherford's paintings are bewildering and seductive: combines of sponge-painted canvases with vibrant neon tubes screwed directly onto the stretcher, accenting the large expanses of her sweeping abstractions. The Californian artist started incorporating neon rods into her tableaux in her 2012 series 'The Bakersfield Project' and 'Coney Island', after becoming enamoured with old neon signs from restaurants and factories across the US. Her solo exhibition of new work, slated to adorn the walls at David Kordansky Gallery this autumn, continues in this tradition: large-scale canvases layered with expressive washes of colour, illuminated by an array of sinuous, gaseous tubes.

Mary Weatherford's exhibition will be on view 13 November – 8 January 2022.

Mary Weatherford, *Blue Cut Fire*, 2017, Flashe and neon on linen, 3×2.6 m

EMILY MAE SMITH
Perrotin, Paris, France

'First and foremost, I'm a painter, an artist, an image-maker. I'm trying to make things I haven't seen or that I want to see,' Emily Mae Smith told *Elephant* in 2018. Part of a new generation of feminist-minded figurative painters working in the surrealist tradition, the New York-based artist is best known for her series of playful works – such as *The Studio (Speculative Objects)* (2021) – in which broomsticks replace people in re-creations of famous paintings from the art-historical cannon. For her first solo exhibition at Paris-based Perrotin, Smith has produced 12 new paintings that continue to situate her broom in a series of different poses and environments, some of which were inspired by historical French figurative painters.

Emily Mae Smith's exhibition will be on view 16 October – 18 December.

Emily Mae Smith, *The Studio (Speculative Objects)*, 2021, oil on linen, 2×1.7 m

ARTnews

9 Sales Highlights from This Year’s Art Basel in Switzerland

By Maximilíano Durón | September 22, 2021

The world’s largest and most important art fair, Art Basel, opened earlier this week in the Swiss city, marking the marquee fair’s first in-person event in Europe since the start of the pandemic. Because of travel restrictions, fewer collectors from the United States and Asia made the journey to Europe, but that didn’t stop the world’s top galleries from making major sales. Below a look at some of what has sold at the fair so far.

Photo : Photo: Fredrik Nilsen Studio/Courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

Mary Weatherford at David Kordansky

Los Angeles–based David Kordansky Gallery had on offer two recent works by Mary Weatherford, both of which sold for $400,000 a piece. Made in the months following a series of solo shows at the Tang Teaching Museum in upstate New York, SITE Santa Fe in New Mexico, and the Aspen Art Museum in Colorado, these works combine Weatherford’s signature abstract painting with neon lights to refer to “the environments, moods, and geological vicissitudes of Hawaii,” according to a release. In an email, Kurt Mueller, a director at Kordansky, said, “As a gallery, we’ve been waiting to return to in-person fairs for nearly two years—the occasion at Basel was marked by incredible energy from attendees and numerous familiar faces.”

Brara, Noor, “Artists on Artists to Watch, and Maybe Even Collect,” *NYTimes.com*, June 14, 2021

The New York Times

Artists on Artists to Watch, and Maybe Even Collect

We asked 16 established names to suggest a fellow talent they feel should be better known.

By Noor Brara | June 14, 2021

The best direction one could give to someone interested in expanding their knowledge of contemporary art is to pay attention to what artists are paying attention to; artists always know before everyone else does. With this in mind, we asked 16 established artists from all over the world about a young or underappreciated artist whose work resonates with them. They spoke about why these talents deserve more attention than they’re getting, and why readers should take time to explore their oeuvres, which inspect, among other things, issues of identity, race, material culture, social justice, climate change and how we live.

Arnold J. Kemp’s “Mr. Kemp: Yellowing, Drying, Scorching” (2020).Credit...Courtesy of the artist and Martos Gallery, New York. Photo by Tom Van Eynde

Mary Weatherford: Arnold J. Kemp, 53

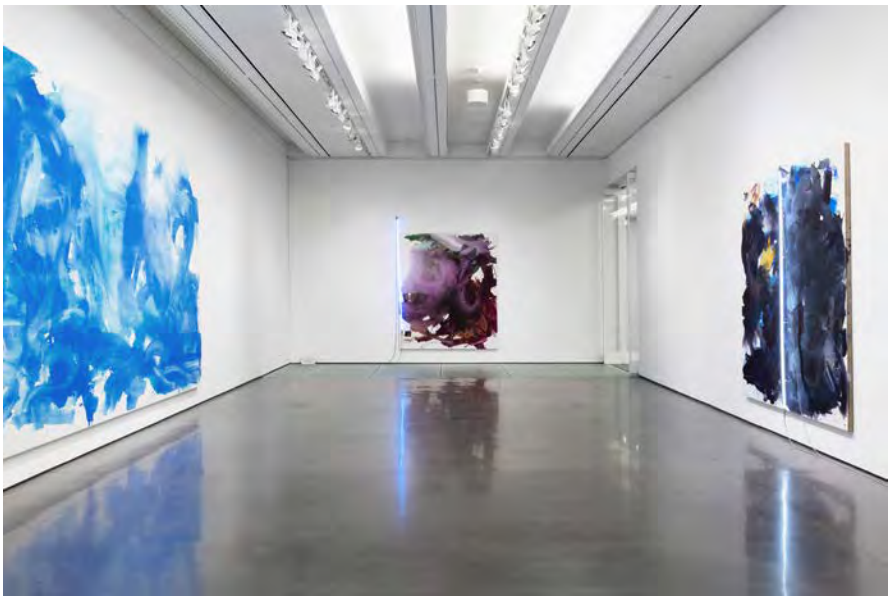
Arnold J. Kemp is an incredible artist whose own work has been overlooked because of his incredible career as an educator. The last mention of him in the paper of record was from 2001 by Holland Cotter … so I see this as pure evidence that what I’m saying is the case, because it’s taken two decades for it to happen again. Kemp makes photography, sculpture and painting, and is also a poet and a performance artist. This particular sculpture, which is brand-new — the first thing I thought about when I saw it was [Jorge Luis] Borges, who is one of my favorite writers. Reading Borges is such a pleasure because I understand that there’s fiction masquerading as truth, and truth masquerading as fiction. And this particular sculpture comes closer to the mastery of Borges than any artwork I’ve ever encountered because of this novel that is stuffed in the pillows, which is indeed by an author named Arnold Joseph Kemp. And Arnold has been mistaken for the author Arnold Kemp. When looking at this chair, I’m wondering, because I know it’s an artwork: “Is this a real novel? Is Arnold pretending that this novel exists? Does this novel exist?” Arnold J. Kemp is also a creator of fictions, and his work is so meta and brilliant. There’s a kind of cool delight I experience in walking around this sculpture in particular.

Travers, Andrew, "Strokes of Neon: Aspen Art Museum showcases Mary Weatherford's 'Neon Paintings'," *AspenTimes.com,* February 4, 2021

THE ASPEN TIMES

Strokes of Neon: Aspen Art Museum showcases Mary Weatherford's 'Neon Paintings'

By Andrew Travers | February 4, 2021



Installation view of Mary Weatherford, "Neon Paintings," 2020. Credit Carter Seddon.

With limited capacity in the Aspen Art Museum due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, and no splashy art opening, no artist talk, no big event crowds, visitors to the Aspen Art Museum have been able to spend intimate time with Mary Weatherford's "Neon Paintings," to get a little lost in or overwhelmed by these immersive works.

The exhibition includes Weatherford's pivotal and breakout paintings, made since 2012, of dramatic abstract painted canvases affixed with glowing neon rods that both illuminate the painting and serve themselves as stand-out linear brushstrokes.

She made first such pieces in Bakersfield, inspired by the neon signage around the central California city. She first showed them there at the Todd Madigan Gallery at California State University at Bakersfield, where she was teaching.

When she first turned on the neon light on her original neon painting, with help from her students, Weatherford recalled in a December 2019 on the "Conversations About Art" podcast with former Aspen Art Museum director Heidi Zuckerman, she was simply relieved that the experiment didn't fail.

"I was even surprised, I was shocked, because the woman at the neon shop in Bakersfield said, 'So did that make the colors in the painting all muddy?' I said, 'No, I don't know, I haven't turned it on.' She said, 'Maybe it's going to make it look muddy.'"

The stakes were high for Weatherford, who feared the lighting shopkeeper might be right.

"I was super gung ho about this idea. … I'd lie in bed and get these stomachaches like, 'This is a terrible idea!'" she recalled, adding with a laugh: "And then I'd be relieved by the fact that it would be in Bakersfield and no one would see it."

Of course, it did work and people did see it. Her "Neon Paintings" became Weatherford's signature, though she had been a working artist since the 1980s, and became something of an art-collecting phenomenon with exhibitions in major galleries and museums.

When the David Kordansky Gallery, of Los Angeles, exhibited new Weatherford neon paintings at the Frieze Art Fair in 2015, T Magazine reported they "flew off their temporary walls within the first half-hour of (Oct. 15's) V.I.P. preview."

Weatherford was announced as the recipient of the 2020 Aspen Award for Art a year ago. The award was to include the customary August artist's talk at the museum and honors at the annual ArtCrush gala, followed by a major solo exhibition. The pandemic scrapped the gatherings, of course, and any award ceremony. But the art show went on. It opened in December and will run through early May.

The paintings are not purely abstract and do often carry secret narratives. Weatherford has said many were inspired by personal experiences and particular landscapes. They are precise moments in time, captured in abstract style but with as specific a subject as a photograph might capture. Weatherford has specified some of them. Works included in the Aspen show include "Tempest," from 2015, depicting a storm on the Pacific — a subject she has returned to often throughout her career — and "Chinatown," with its moody nocturnal blues and warm oranges, depicting Manhattan's Chinatown at night. "Blue Cut Fire," with its violent movements of reds behind blue-green neon tubing, depicts the 2016 wildfire that tore through the San Gabriel Mountains.

Weatherford's practice for these pieces carries on the abstract expressionist tradition of painting on the floor using a physically demanding process. She works barefoot, she said in the podcast, occasionally leaving a trace of stray footprint on her canvas and always leaving an undeniable residue of human exertion on the work.

'The painting becomes the portal to all the other next paintings," she said of her process. "Because I paint on the floor, I paint flat. And so when I see it stretched on the wall, it's a completely different painting."

HYPERALLERGIC

Melancholy in Black and Neon

Mary Weatherford’s new paintings confront us with a sense of place, a remembered moment, a hidden story.

By Mika Ross-Southall | January 9, 2021

Installation view, Mary Weatherford: *Train Yards* at Gagosian, London (© Mary Weatherford. Photo: Lucy Dawkins. Courtesy Gagosian)

LONDON — In his memoir *Speak, Memory* (1951) Vladimir Nabokov writes about why trains are compelling and mournful. Their long-drawn sigh when pulling into the station; the shadows and chinks of light that dance across carriages; the unsettling excitement of journeying into the unknown. The Californian artist Mary Weatherford tries to capture these qualities in her new series of 10 huge abstract paintings, *Train Yards*, on view at the Gagosian Gallery in London through February 27.

“There’s always something lonely and comforting about the sound of a train whistle,” she tells us in a 15-minute film on the gallery’s website that accompanies the exhibition. “Because you know somebody’s going somewhere. Somebody has a plan and somebody’s left someone and somebody’s going to meet someone. There’s a beginning and there’s going to be an ending and then there’s going to be another beginning.”

Created over the past four years, the paintings are based on the sounds and movements of trains and railway yards in the United States at night. Each contains a haunting, velvety morass of black emulsion brush-strokes — dynamic zig-zags, splatters, smudges, all pummeling the stretched linen, mimicking the rhythm of a train going over tracks. Most have one thin white neon strip-light drilled into their surface and connected by wires dropping to the floor like a luminous, three-dimensional line drawing atop the painted black background.

These works are powerful and riveting, partly thanks to their imposing scale. It’s about “trying to paint an experience,” Weatherford explains in the film, “and about being able to perceive colors at night …. They’re nocturnes. There are varying colors of darkness, and the [fluorescent] lights have the effect of moving towards you, going away from you. One might even be reminded of … bells and whistles and clanging.”

Mary Weatherford, “Cosmos” (2020), flashe on linen, 112 x 99 inches (© Mary Weatherford. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen Studio. Courtesy Gagosian)

“Bellows” (2016), in the first room, bursts with clouds of dark purple- and gray-tinged black paint framed by a stark white border. A short, vertical neon rod, its wire cords gently arching away from the painting, suggests the glow of a train in the distance. On the opposite wall, the swooshing black marks in “Nickel Plate Road” (2017-18) contain hints of purple and navy blue. A thicker patch of paint, which travels diagonally from the lower left corner to the center of the canvas, forms a path into a far-off horizon that disappears into pitch black; translucent vertical and horizontal lines above create a blur of buildings and trees passing by. Along the full length of the painting’s right edge is the cold, harsh white of a neon light — man-made rays from a train or station beaming across the landscape, perhaps.

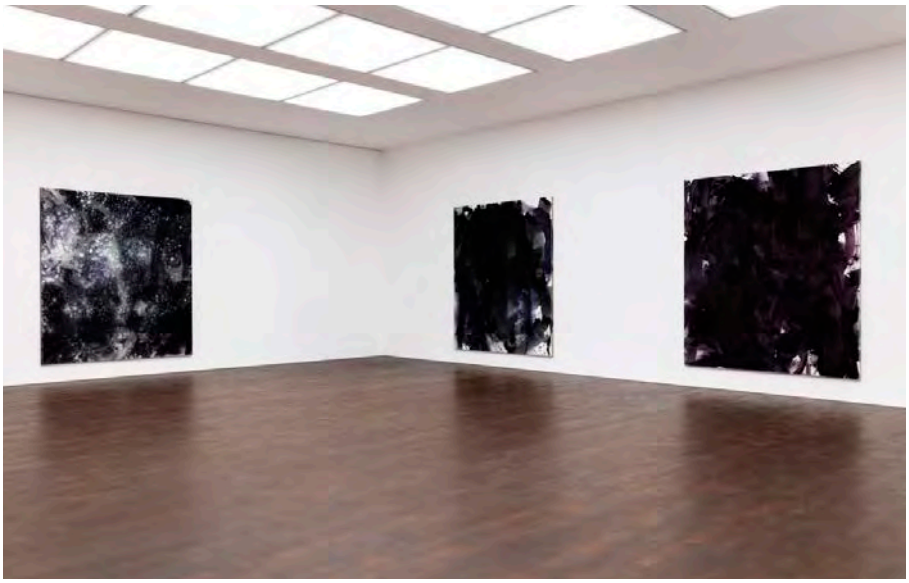
American folk and blues music influenced the series, too; a lot of the painting’s titles come from song lyrics. “Country blues has so much about trains and traveling,” Weatherford says in the video, which includes a wistful blues soundtrack by Thurston Moore from Sonic Youth. Moore also performs a melancholic cover of “This Train Is Bound for Glory” (first recorded in 1922 and adapted by Woody Guthrie in 1958) in front of Weatherford’s work in the gallery, as well as a new acoustic composition inspired by one of her paintings — a beautifully hopeful melody that drifts over an unrelenting, rhythmic bass.

“There are times [in country blues] when people ride on top of trains to get to places … and the heavens are going by,” Weatherford adds. “There’s a combination of movement: of the train moving through space and the earth spinning, which makes it look like the stars are going across the sky.” In the second room we are met with six more works. Not all feature the neon lights. Instead, “Cosmos” (2020), for instance, radiates with bright flecks and swirls of white paint launching like rockets and stars from the hazy, ash background. Almost the entire canvas is covered in black in “Mars Light” (2019), but the paint glows with a clay-red pigment. “Orion’s Belt” (2016) does include neon, here as an unyielding horizontal line that stretches across two bulbous black shapes and straps the canvas to the gallery’s wall.

It was 2012 when Weatherford first started using neon. A visiting artist at California State University in Bakersfield, she became entranced by the fluorescent signs — some half-illuminated or burnt out — of restaurants, shops, and old factories around the mid-sized city east of Los Angeles. The result was *The Bakersfield Project*, a series of seven large canvases swathed in muted colors and inscribed with a neon strip-light of sickly pink, green, blue, or red. She followed these with more paintings based on other cities, including Manhattan and LA. In “Coney Island II” (2012) four colorful neon rods (two white, one orange, one yellow) are set at jagged angles evoking the up-down-up-down motion of a rollercoaster.

Although these neon paintings seem like a departure for Weatherford from her earlier abstract paintings, some of her work from the 1990s and 2000s incorporates natural found objects, such as starfish, sponges, and seashells, on plains of color that saturate the entire canvas.

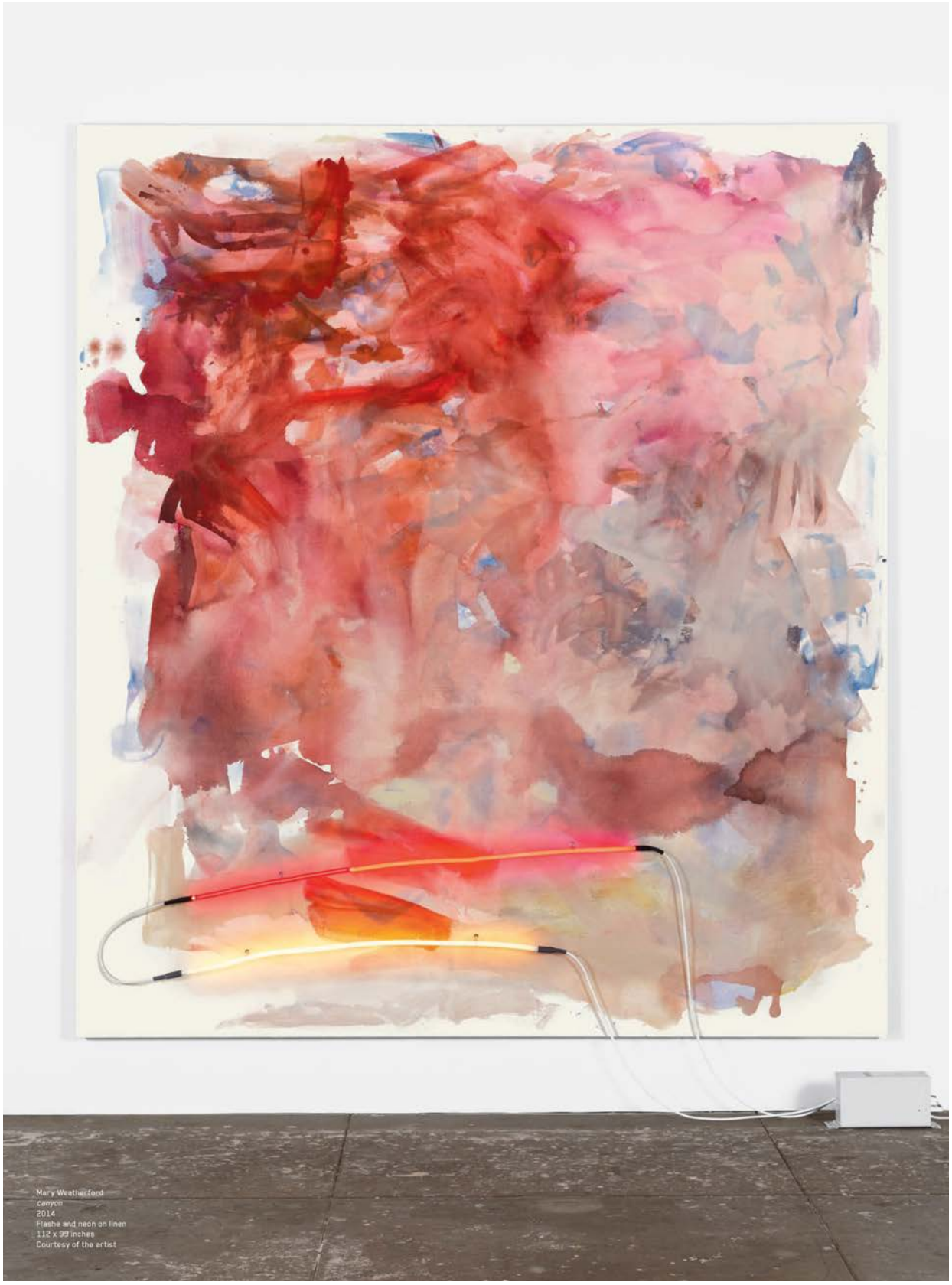
What makes *Train Yards* stand out is the way it intensely and convincingly confronts us with a sense of place, a remembered moment, a hidden story that we’ve all experienced. “I’ve always wanted to make paintings about people’s lives,” Weatherford says in the film, and “the arc of history.” With this new show, those lives and histories are felt.



Installation view, Mary Weatherford: *Train Yards* at Gagosian, London (© Mary Weatherford. Photo: Lucy Dawkins. Courtesy Gagosian)

Donoghue, Katy, “Mary Weatherford,” *Whitewall,* Winter 2020, pp. 88 - 93

whitewall



Mary Weatherford
Canyon
2014
Flashe and neon on linen
112 x 99 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Donoghue, Katy, “Mary Weatherford,” *Whitewall,* Winter 2020, pp. 88 - 93

Mary Weatherford

The artist presents 30 years of work in “Canyon—Daisy—Eden.”

BY KATY DONOGHUE

Donoghue, Katy, “Mary Weatherford,” *Whitewall,* Winter 2020, pp. 88 - 93

Portrait by Stephen Busken.

> “I don’t keep a journal. I keep paintings”

“Mary Weatherford: Canyon—Daisy—Eden” is on view at the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College February 1–July 12, 2020. Organized by curator Bill Arning and Tang Teaching Museum Dayton director Ian Berry, the exhibition is a survey of the artist’s three decades of painting. The show presents Weatherford’s exploration of color—her sense for which, she’s realized, has remained consistent over the years—through several distinct series.

Whitewall spoke with Weatherford about the process of looking back on 30 years of painting, as well as why she has collected her own work since the very beginning.

WHITEWALL: *Where does the title of your show “Canyon—Daisy—Eden” come from?*

MARY WEATHERFORD: Those are three recent paintings in my upcoming survey: *Canyon, Daisy,* and *Eden*. I’m interested in language. If you push together my painting titles, they start to form a poem. The title of the exhibition is a short poem constructed of painting titles.

WW: *What has it been like to work on this survey show?*

MW: It’s co-organized by Bill Arning and Ian Berry. Bill started coming to my New York studio in 1989. I met Ian Berry in 1999 just after moving to Los Angeles. So we’ve been friends and colleagues for two and three decades. It’s a different pace of collaboration than working with a young person who has recently come to the work (which is wonderful in a different way). Collaborating with Ian and Bill is like working with childhood friends. They have their own memories of how the work was understood or received 20 years ago.

WW: *What was the starting point?*

MW: I have records of everything, images of every piece I’ve made—35-millimeter slides, 4-by-5 transparencies, Polaroids, and digitals going back to the eighties. Even so, it was an amazing experience to bring the work out of storage and hang it salon-style in the studio: 2,000 square feet of 30 years of work, floor to ceiling. What struck me was that the constant is the color. My color sense hasn’t changed since I was a teenager.

WW: *How would you describe that color sense?*

MS: There is a dualistic theme to my work. It goes from night to day, from a low range to a high range. The way I choose colors is maybe like an improvisational pianist choosing whether to play in the bass or the treble keys. I have infinite choices, and I like to go from low to a high—I like to paint without black, then paint with all black. I like to combine neutrals with high chroma color.

Mary Weatherford, *Double Margaret*, 1996, seashells, acrylic, oil, silkscreen, and xerox transfer on canvas, 36 x 20 inches, pier and overlap, courtesy of the artist.

Donoghue, Katy, “Mary Weatherford,” *Whitewall,* Winter 2020, pp. 88 - 93

Mary Weatherford
Ruby I (Thriftmart)
2012
Flashe and neon on linen
93 x 79 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Donoghue, Katy, “Mary Weatherford,” *Whitewall,* Winter 2020, pp. 88 - 93

Mary Weatherford
Night and Day
1996
Oil and silkscreen on jute
90 x 63 inches
Pen on back
Courtesy of the artist

Donoghue, Katy, “Mary Weatherford,” *Whitewall,* Winter 2020, pp. 88 - 93

“IF I DON’T INVEST IN MYSELF, WHO WILL?”

The phrase “personal iconography” has been in the air since I was in college. What if, instead, there’s personal color? For me, it’s the color.

WW: *How does the exhibition unfold?*

MW: It not exactly chronological, but sort of. From the early planning stages, it was important to us that the show didn’t start with small paintings, and end big. I’ve made big paintings since I was in my teens and twenties. So the show is large-scale all the way through, with the exception of one wall hung salon-style with all types of works from different years, of all sizes.

WW: *Unwrapping the works in your studio and putting them up on the walls, did it bring up any memories, or new feelings about older pieces?*

MW: I felt intensely about it. Fond of them. The process felt like going to my high school reunion in San Diego. Everyone was changed, but not really. Their voices were the same and their personalities. Some people I had forgotten about entirely, but upon seeing them, they sprang back to life. Art is autobiographical. I associate the paintings with different political eras—when Bush was elected, Clinton . . . Or events—the invasion of Iraq, 9/11, the 2008 crash, a breakup, my sister’s death. I can tell what was happening in the world, or my world, by looking at the pictures. I don’t keep a journal. I keep paintings.

WW: *How do you choose what you want for your own archives?*

MW: I like paintings that have a meaning to me—maybe a secret meaning.

WW: *Is it always easy for you to choose that?*

MW: Usually.

WW: *Your series vary greatly from one to the next. Does it ever feel like a risk for you, or does it feel natural when you move into the next?*

MW: It feels natural, or just necessary. It’s not thought out, and it’s beyond my control. I just start moving in that direction.

I heard “I don’t understand” a handful of times when I was changing the work a lot in the nineties. I thought, “This will make sense in the rearview mirror.”

I couldn’t form into words why it changed when it did. I couldn’t explain that I wasn’t searching for anything. I was never searching. I was just making. And it was wonderful in the moment.

I have good self-esteem around my work. Over the years friends have commented that they thought it was funny how much I loved my own work. I would say, “If I don’t love it, who will?”

The reason I collect my own work is that if I don’t invest in myself, who will?

Everything I have made was happiness to me; it was satisfying.

5 design things to do week of Nov 2 - 8

By Karen Bruckner & Frances Anderton | November 2, 2020

This week: Talk a virtual walk through fairy gardens by Takako Tajima; read poetry on ACE Hotel’s marquee; see housing solutions by the next generation of designers at AIA/LA’s 2 x 8 DOMUM; meet the ghosts of Bunker Hill at a book launch for author Nathan Marsak, with Frances Anderton; see Mary Weatherford’s ‘The Japan Drawings’ at David Kordansky gallery.

Mary Weatherford, *In the cedar forest*, 2019, shellac ink on Gampi Torinoko paper. Coutresy of David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

Mary Weatherford: The Japan Drawings

David Kordansky Gallery welcomes Los Angeles based artist Mary Weatherford to their new exhibtion space, designed by the multidisciplinary architecture and design practice wHY. The exhibition, ‘The Japan Drawings’ brings together four groups of works - all shellac ink paintings on Gampi Torinoko paper - that Weatherford produced during a 2019 residency at Troedsson Villa in Nikko, Japan. The residency, founded by artist Anne Eastman in 2015, offers immersion in a setting of ancient and modern architecture (including shrines and temples) within a forest landscape. Weatherford’s new drawings reflect this environment in a range of compositional approaches, color palettes, and textures. Read more about the artist and the exhibition here.

When: Opens Nov 7; exhibition runs through Dec 17. By appointment only.
Where: David Kordansky Gallery, 5130 W Edgewood Pl, Los Angeles 90019
Tickets: Free, but reservations required. You can make an appointment by calling 323.935.3030.

Greenberger, Alex, "Mary Weatherford Revisits a 1957 ARTnews Profile of Painter Joan Mitchell," *ARTnews.com*, September 4, 2020

ARTnews

Mary Weatherford Revisits a 1957 ARTnews Profile of Painter Joan Mitchell

By Alex Greenberger | September 4, 2020


Mitchell
paints a picture

©ARTNEWS

In 1957, art critic Irving Sandler paid a visit to the studio of painter Joan Mitchell, an Abstract Expressionist known for her brushy images capturing nature. The result of that visit, printed in the October 1957 issue of *ARTnews*, became one of the most famous essays in this magazine's "Paints a Picture" series, in which an artist illuminates the process behind one of his or her artworks. With an upcoming traveling retrospective of Mitchell's work at the Baltimore Museum of Art in mind, *ARTnews* enlisted Mary Weatherford, an artist who has spoken of being inspired by Mitchell, to discuss Sandler's article. "He's a beautiful writer, so clear, so easy to read," Weatherford said of Sandler's writing. "I want to be the equivalent when I'm talking about this."

—

Irving Sandler on Joan Mitchell: She finds particularly distasteful moral insinuations concerning "good" versus "bad" criteria, and insists that "there is no one way to paint; there is no single answer." Miss Mitchell is reticent to talk about painting, so in order to approach the underlying processes in her work, the Socratic method was needed, rejecting some classifications, modifying or keeping others.

Mary Weatherford on Irving Sandler: He basically tells us at the very beginning that for this article he just ekes things out of her by asking lots of questions. I like that…. Sometimes, writing about art gets swayed toward the artists, but really, it's always two artists—a collaboration, in a way. I can tell how hard Irving Sandler worked to try to get it right, to try to get down in the English language what Mitchell thought about her own work.

Unlike some of the younger artists who have reacted away from the elders of Abstract-Expressionism, she sees herself as a "conservative," although her pictures can hardly be described as hidebound. She not only appreciates the early struggles of the older painters, whose efforts expedited acceptance for those following them, but finds a number of qualities in their work that have a profound meaning for her.

Here's the great thing about Sandler's writing: I don't notice much. A sentence goes down easy. His writing doesn't have any barbs on it. He's such a beautiful writer.

In the case of Bridge, she hesitated and decided to save this canvas for future study. The picture was rejected because the feeling was not specific enough, and because the painting was not "accurate." To her, accuracy involves a clear image produced in the translation of the substance of nature into the nature of memory.

She starts a picture called Bridge for the article and then abandons it. Then she starts this other painting about her standard poodle [George Swimming at Barnes Hole]. I have a friend who, when he was a graduate student, interviewed Mitchell over a long period of time and asked her about that painting. He asked her if it got too cold for the dog to swim, and she said to him, "No, Paul, the painting got cold." That's almost what Sandler is describing—that kind of process where she starts out with a good memory on a sunny day, and then the painting gets cold.

She liked George, but felt that it still lacked a certain structure and an "accuracy in intensity." When asked about her personal meanings in this work and their communication, she answered: "If a painting comes from them, then they don't matter. Other people don't have to see what I do in my work."

He's describing someone like a tennis player. You have to know what you're doing while you're making decisions. Your body has to be so trained that you can command it to make whatever decision your mind is thinking.

Urist, Jacoba, “Take A Virtual Trip to Mary Weatherford’s Studio,” *CulturedMag.com*, June 23, 2020

CULTURED MAGAZINE

TAKE A VIRTUAL TRIP TO MARY WEATHERFORD’S STUDIO

By Jacoba Urist I June 23, 2020

MARY WEATHERFORD. PHOTO BY ANTONY HOFFMAN; COURTESY OF GAGOSIAN.

Known for sublime color and light paintings, Mary Weatherford creates expressive canvases that capture a visceral sense of place. Over the last decade, her work has also become synonymous with a signature technique: using neon to push the bounds of abstraction. An important departure from her massive colorscapes, “The Train Yards”—originally slated to open at Gagosian in June, pre-COVID, and now tentatively rescheduled for fall—is a collection of entirely black paintings. Made over the last four years, they translate the night view and sounds of a train yard as they evoke the grand mythology of railway travel. To wit, the painter has compiled an accompanying Spotify playlist of the same title, to celebrate the tradition of the locomotive in American music. Weatherford’s process is heavily research-based. Deeply moved by the history of the transcontinental railway, the artist shares how its dark legacy also influenced this body of work. We met for a virtual studio visit, in which she greeted me with a huge, entirely blank wall calendar in the background—the perfect iteration of the moment.

What has the COVID-19 shutdown and the last three months been like for you?
I flew to South Africa in early March with the intention of making a journey northward up the continent. I’d never been to Africa and I’d just finished all my “Train Yards” paintings. My plan was to make a slow trip over two and a half months, gradually traveling north from South Africa to Zimbabwe, and up, up, up ending in Morocco. From there, I would fly to London for the opening of “The Train Yards” at Gagosian, scheduled for the first week of June. These are serious paintings, and I was pleased with the time slot—Francis Bacon’s exhibition “Couplings” was Gagosian’s London show last summer. I thought there would be a good connection between Bacon’s work, which has tremendous gravitas, and this work.

Had you planned on painting in Africa?
When I was in Japan last fall, I worked the entire time and felt that I missed out on a lot of experiences because I was working. This journey was intended simply to see and experience places. I’m not the kind of artist who always needs to be making something, though I know there are artists who do. I paint from memory. Africa was to be a trip where I could experience things without bringing my paints along. It’s a lot of work to take all the supplies. It’s a big kit. Maybe I would make sketches, but nothing I would exhibit.

What was South Africa like during COVID?
When I arrived in Cape Town, there was maybe one case in the country. But, coming off the plane, they still took our temperatures and had signs about the virus and washing hands everywhere. I got there on a Saturday and by the second Monday, the president, Cyril Ramaphosa, went on television and made an extraordinary speech about how he was going to completely lock down the country. It was the most serious lockdown in the world outside of Wuhan. No planes in; no planes out.

We relocated to Hermanus, a summer vacation spot known for whale watching. The beach house was fine for a few weeks but then the weather turned. I flipped on the heat and it didn’t work. So from there, we moved to a small farmhouse in a nearby valley at the edge of a vineyard. It was a working farm; we had cattle and chickens and a baboon troupe and could walk around outside on the property. People weren’t allowed to exercise outside in public in South Africa or even walk their dog on the sidewalk. You could only leave your house for the store or the pharmacy. The government made it illegal to post falsities about the virus. There was a guy who posted some falsity on Facebook and they went to his house and arrested him.

We started a project making masks with a local woman and her mother. We donated masks to the hospital and the police department. After 35 days in lockdown, we received an email from the Canadian High Commission through the United States Embassy, informing us that the Canadians were organizing a flight from Cape Town to London, and then we could get a direct one to Los Angeles.

What are your thoughts as Los Angeles begins to reopen?
Today I saw that the governor, Gavin Newsom, said that everybody is required to wear a mask in public. I’m frustrated with the belligerent ignorance with which people go outside without a mask. It’s defiance in a way that’s unnecessary.

You’ve been working on the “Train Yards”series since 2016. It feels like an eternity has passed in that time.
Much has happened in four years. I started these paintings before the current presidency and administration. They’re intense pieces that I was working on for myself, in between other projects. I wanted to make an exhibition that was a room full of black paintings with white light

MARY WEATHERFORD, *NO. 4000,* 2017–18. FLASHE AND NEON ON LINEN | 112 X 99 IN | 284.5 X 251.5 CM © MARY WEATHERFORD, PHOTO BY FREDRIK NILSEN; COURTESY OF GAGOSIAN.

that would conjure the feeling of a train yard at night, locomotives and various trains coming and going—the atmosphere, the sounds, the smells, the temperature. “Train Yards” was something I would come back to between other exhibitions. My work is often about the history of the United States. For this series, I researched the history of the laying of the transcontinental railroad. The more I read, I learned that it was mostly built during the Civil War.

I was driving here to speak with you, and I thought, “When was the first time that I thought about trains as a child?” Do you remember the jump rope song for Double Dutch, where it says, “Meet me at the station, be on time”? You would have to jump into the Double Dutch right at the time. One girl jumps in after the other. I made a playlist on Spotify to accompany “Train Yards.” It’s twenty tracks—country blues, folk music; Mississippi John Hurt, Woody Guthrie; all of the songs have the image of the train. Once you start looking at traditional American music, you see the train is used to convey love, coming and going, travel, freedom, being on the road. The first track is Odetta’s “900 Miles.” People may be unfamiliar with her, but she’s a great American folk singer. The last song is the Joan Baez version of “The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down” by Robbie Robertson.

Hearing this playlist, I pictured you painting to it in the studio.
Oh no. These are two entirely different things. That’s a question I get often: do you listen to music while you’re working? I can listen to music up until the point where the painting gets difficult. I think my senses are hypersensitive, so I can’t smell and hear at the same time, or look and smell, or look and hear. If I’m looking at a color and there’s music—I can’t, it’s too much to process. I might listen to music or a podcast while mixing colors, but even then, it sometimes becomes such a difficult task that I have to turn the music off.

What is the narrative in these abstract paintings?
That takes a bit of art history to answer. What is an abstract painting? What is a pure abstraction? Think about Malevich or Albers. I was about to say Alma Thomas. She’s on my mind because of that photograph of the Obamas at their White House seder with Alma Thomas’s *Resurrection* (1966) on the wall in the family dining room. I think Ad Reinhardt is an abstract painter, but Alma Thomas is conjuring something for us—dappled light. So you’re asking me, what is the narrative in your abstract paintings, and my answer is: I’m not sure I make abstract paintings. In the late ’80’s and ’90’s, the concentric circle paintings I made were circular timelines and they could be considered abstract, meaning that they don’t point to anything outside of themselves.

Take Mondrian’s *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (1942-43), which I would argue is a painting of Boogie Woogie. When you look at the work, you experience the rhythm of the music. In my series, the painting *Heaven Going By* (2020) looks like the Milky Way, the stars in the sky. It has no neon in it. It’s a dark night. But it also looks like when headlights shine on falling snow. So, it’s a representation of several things. Is it an abstract painting? Are these train yards that have been abstracted? I try to create works that reproduce an experience. I really made them to imagine myself being in a certain place.

How did your historical research impact your process?
In a way, these works allude to stories. The building of the US railroad lays out a history of enslavement, immigration, racism and Manifest Destiny. There’s one painting called *Across the Plains* (2019) that imagines a night sky on the great plains. There, the railroad brought the bison to near extinction, moved in settlers and drove the native Plains tribes from their land. It was essentially war without war.

Southern railroad lines before the Civil War were built by enslaved people. The Central Pacific line that came up from Sacramento through the High Sierras was built almost entirely by Chinese immigrants, at a great human toll. The history of their contribution is just now being written about by Stanford professor Gordon Chang, in his 2019 book *Ghosts of Gold Mountain: The Epic Story of the Chinese Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad.* Unbelievably, there’s no personal record by a Chinese immigrant who worked on the railroad. There was a tunnel that took years to dig and blast through, during which Chinese immigrant workers lived in the tunnel. In 1867, there was a famous strike in which the owners of the railroad cut off the food supply and starved thousands of immigrant laborers into breaking the strike. They still never got equal pay compared to other workers.

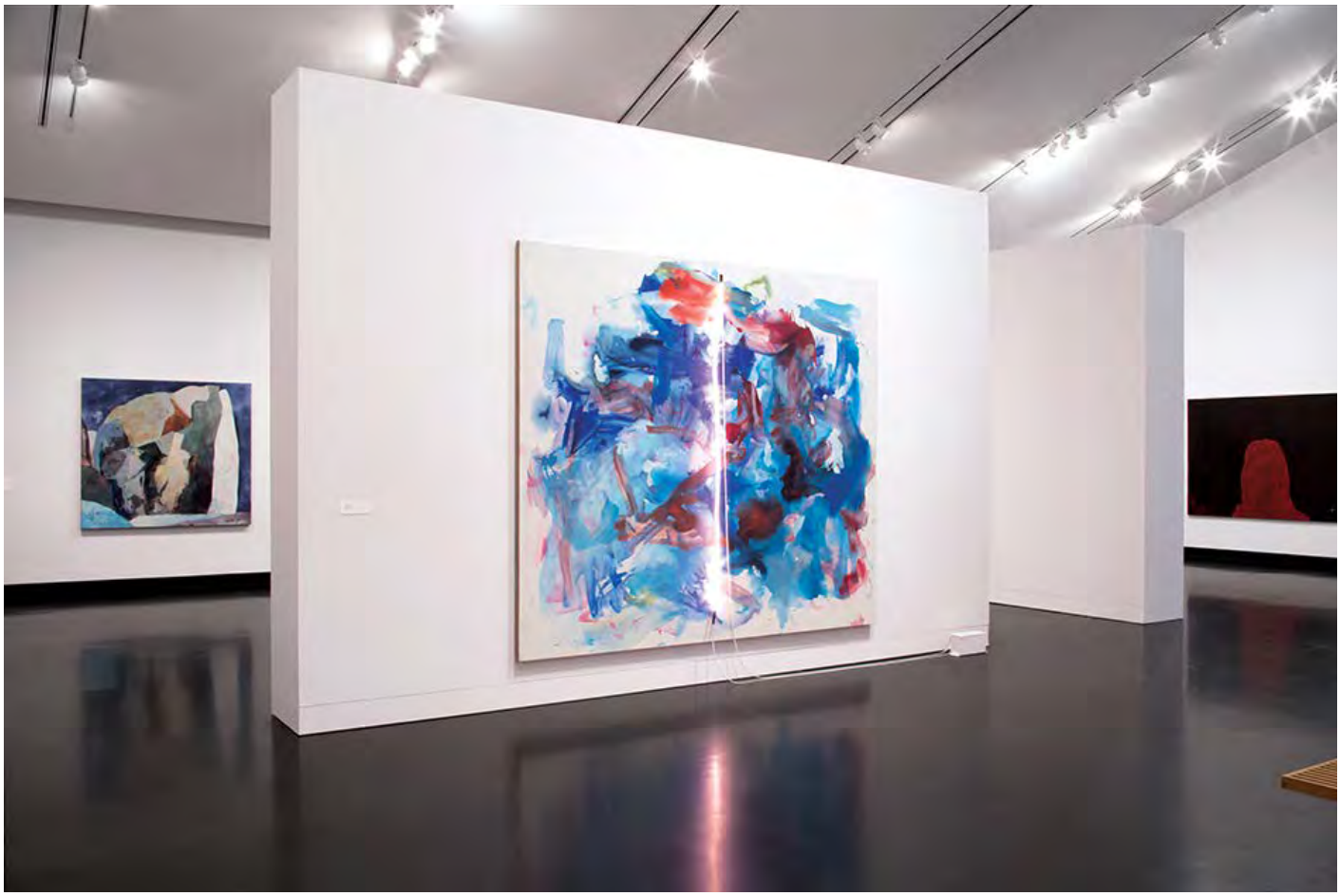
This exhibition is about many things: freedom and travel, as well as the dark side of history. But the works aren’t specific illustrations; I’m trying to paint mystery.

Westfall, Stephen, “Beyond Neon: Mary Weatherford’s abstraction is rooted in a sense of place,”
ARTnews.com, Art in America, April 15, 2020

Art in America

BEYOND NEON: MARY WEATHERFORD’S ABSTRACTION IS ROOTED IN A SENSE OF PLACE

By Stephen Westfall | April 15, 2020



View of Mary Weatherford’s exhibition “Canyon–Daisy–Eden,” 2020, showing (foreground) *lovely day,* 2015, Flashe and neon on linen; at the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery.

In 2012, Mary Weatherford was invited by the artist Joey Kötting, gallery director at California State University, Bakersfield, to make a series of paintings in response to the area’s high desert landscape, local history, and light. Driving around during her five-week stint, Weatherford was entranced by the glow of neon signs in town and at roadside stands beyond the city’s borders. Seeing the signs set against the Bakersfield sky at twilight catalyzed something for her. She found a local neon shop to fabricate ever-so-slightly bent tubes that she then affixed to large canvases bearing broad-stroked, fluid grounds. She chose each color—ruby, lemon yellow, light green, etc.—for its effect on the background pigments and left the cords and connecting boxes fully visible in front of the canvases as a form of “drawing.” Before long, these breathtaking composite paintings, with their echoes of such predecessors as Keith Sonnier and Bruce Nauman, boosted her already significant career as a canny post-Pop, post-Pictures Generation feminist painter. She has exhibited at David Kordansky Gallery in Los Angeles; participated in MoMA’s 2014 survey “Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World”; and mounted an acclaimed 2018 exhibition at the cavernous Gagosian space on 24th Street in New York.

Westfall, Stephen, “Beyond Neon: Mary Weatherford’s abstraction is rooted in a sense of place,” *ARTnews.com*, Art in America, April 15, 2020

Mary Weatherford: *Violetta*, 1991, acrylic, Flashe, and silkscreen ink on canvas, 39 by 72 inches. PRIVATE COLLECTION.

Currently, Weatherford is the subject of a tight but well-selected thirty-year traveling retrospective. “Canyon-Daisy-Eden” can be seen at the Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College through July 12 and will travel to SITE Santa Fe in October. The show makes clear that the neon paintings, for which she is best known, relate not only to the sense of place that emerged in her work after she moved back to California from New York in 1999, but also to the collaged and silkscreened canvases that she began in the late 1980s.

Weatherford, who was born in Ojai, California, in 1963, grew up in San Diego as the daughter of an Episcopalian priest and a historian. She left California for Princeton, which offers art classes but not an art major. There she painted and studied architecture, while serving as an assistant to Sam Hunter, a foundational historian of postwar American art, especially Abstract Expressionism and Color Field painting. Weatherford probably discerned in both those movements formal reminders of the mountains, cliffs, beaches, and impossibly deep and variant Pacific horizons along the California coast. Pollock, Newman, Rothko, Frankenthaler, Louis, and Noland offered an evolving conception of what Big Painting could do, from distribution of incident to saturation of color.

In a different though related vein, she attended a Rosalind Krauss lecture based on the scholar’s influential essay “The Originality of the Avant-Garde,” which examines the paradoxical relationship of “original” artists like Rodin to formal repetition, copies, and editions. Sherrie Levine’s 1981 photographs of reproductions of Walker Evans photographs raised questions about male control of “authorship” and how a woman might enter the conversation. In 1984–85, after Princeton, Weatherford attended the Independent Study Program of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Immersed in an environment emphasizing semiotics, critical theory, and appropriation, she was challenged to absorb such principles yet paint beyond their parameters.

AMONG THE FIRST Weatherford paintings to garner attention were her large target paintings of 1989, two of which hang at the entrance to the Tang exhibition. Both titled *Nagasaki*, the canvases are each 82 inches square with extra-deep stretcher bars that evoke the iconic objecthood of the early stripe and Protractor paintings of her famous Princeton precursor, Frank Stella. The circular bands, echoing the iconographic impact of compositions by Jasper Johns and Kenneth Noland, have the flatness of Stella’s early handling, but without the border of exposed canvas between each plane of color. The hues themselves are more atmospheric: an orange bisque filling the corners of one painting, a pinkish field embracing baked beige circles set flush to brick-red ones in the other. These colors are derived from a kimono given to the artist by a former boyfriend, but there’s a shared light in them reminiscent of west-facing stucco houses just after the sun has gone down, a Southern California light that whispers of Romanticism despite Weatherford’s Minimalist and Neo-Geo appropriations. And then there’s the shared title: “Nagasaki” referring to Puccini’s posthumous *Madame Butterfly* and the suffering, doomed Cio-Cio San, even as it also resonates with the historically ominous titles of some of Stella’s Black paintings (e.g., *Arbeit Macht Frei*, 1967). One can hardly miss the point of associating a bull’s-eye with an atomic-bombed Japanese city. Not in the show is another 1989 painting, titled (using an alternative Anglicized spelling) *Cho-Cho-San*. Here a silkscreened peony blooms against its darker leaves, an ectoplasmic-toned white against a black-green ground. An early example of Weatherford’s extended exploration of silkscreen and collage, the work nods to yet one more postwar male artist—Andy Warhol, who hid his Romanticism behind the apparent emotional cool of Pop appropriations.

Weatherford began silkscreening onto canvas in 1988, and, though the target paintings intervened, she continued for nearly a decade to employ this transfer method as a primary means for fixing an image. There are, in fact, multiple *Cho-Cho-San* ink-and-oil works (from both 1989 and 1990), as

Westfall, Stephen, “Beyond Neon: Mary Weatherford’s abstraction is rooted in a sense of place,”
ARTnews.com, Art in America, April 15, 2020

Mary Weatherford: *Night and Day*, 1996, oil and silkscreen on jute, 90 by 63 inches.
PRIVATE COLLECTION.

there are multiple Nagasakis. In the *Cho-Cho-San* works, the concentric circles of the target are reduced to thin lines dissolving in an amniotic pool of transparent darkness, releasing the flower into light like the answer floating upward in a Magic 8 Ball. In the Tang survey, *Third Riddle* (1991), a large (almost 9-foot-high) vertical painting whose title alludes to the suitors’ test in *Turandot*, performs much like *Cho-Cho-San*. A silkscreened chrysanthemum blooms about three quarters of the way to the top and a bit to the right out of a violet-black stain split by a spear of light. The shadow that crosses the white gleam and fills up the space between the petals renders the flower seemingly three dimensional. In the deep seep of the dark violet stain set against the subtle detonation of the flower, we see the mastery of composition that Weatherford brings to her paintings from the outset. In the opera, the answer to the third riddle is “love,” which augurs the cold-hearted princess Turandot’s ultimate surrender to marriage. The luminosity of the blossom in the painting is perfectly matched to the moment of emotional illumination in the opera.

The distraught yet resiliently defiant female psyche is poetically figured throughout the silkscreened paintings. According to curator-critic Bill Arning, the near or outright mythic stature of beset female protagonists in ballet and opera referenced by Weatherford are often projections of the artist herself, so the “her” of *Her Insomnia* (1991) and *Her Clairvoyance* (1993) is the artist[1]. Insomnia was long related to the “woman’s affliction” called hysteria, and thus to the debilitative foresight of Cassandra and Ophelia. *Her Insomnia* distributes red thorny rose stems on a near-black ground, while *Her Clairvoyance* shows eels writhing on a rocky ultraviolet sea bed.

A nocturnal palette runs through those paintings, but not all of Weatherford’s operatic images are so deeply shadowed. In *5:00 a.m.* (1992), thorny pale-green stems establish a vertical band against the washed-out violet-pink field, at roughly the golden section division of the six-by-ten-foot horizontal canvas. Even fewer shadows appear in *Violetta* (1991), whose flowers star an expanse of fluorescently virulent olive chartreuse. The flowers seem to flutter like moths and, sure enough, by 1994 Weatherford was collaging images of butterflies and moths, along with the actual shells of sea snails and starfish, onto her paintings’ surfaces. Bearing a number of these smaller works, the “salon wall” in the Tang installation is itself a kind of bricolage installation.

BY 1995, WEATHERFORD introduced figurative elements to her paintings—in some cases, a silhouette of her beloved younger sister Margaret’s head; in others, an image of herself bent double and clutching her head as if in grief, while her long hair spills over her hands like water. In hindsight, it is an almost unspeakable irony that Weatherford’s anguished pose foreshadows Margaret’s death from cancer in 2012, the same year that the artist made her formal breakthrough in Bakersfield. Margaret’s silhouette is a centered vertical protuberance in several paintings, rising from the bottom of the canvas into the pictorial field and rounding into human shape in a way that can also recall a pool or a geological formation. There’s a whimsical effect to these portraits, since the expressive features of Margaret’s face are usually obscured in favor of a plane of paint, much like the thick pours that constitute the primary figure-ground relationship in a number of the smaller moth and seashell paintings on the salon wall. Through this combination of bricolage and body-centric painterliness, Weatherford transitions from the formal restraint (even at Big Painting scale) of the Neo Geo and Pictures aesthetics that she emerged from into a much freer painting space. She hasn’t given up photo silkscreen or printing yet, but the rest of the painting surface is no longer suppressed to accommodate the transferred image. Rather, the transferred image sits like a stick-on element over other surface layers.

In the seven-and-a-half-foot-high *Night and Day* (1996), Weatherford’s kneeling, hair-clutching image, almost life-size, rests in the lower center of a blue-black ground. Above, the remainder of the field is filled by a pale pink half-orb, with a much smaller white disk inside it. The deep yellow and dark orange silkscreen shape of Weatherford’s body is bolstered—made an almost tangible presence—by the addition of paint. The artist was using jute instead of canvas at this point, and the material’s coarser texture meant that heavier-bodied paint was needed to hold flat color, while looser and thinner washes would pool irregularly in the exaggerated pockets between warp and weft, where the priming coat had settled. The work’s vinyl

Westfall, Stephen, "Beyond Neon: Mary Weatherford's abstraction is rooted in a sense of place," *ARTnews.com*, Art in America, April 15, 2020

Mary Weatherford: *absorbent*, 2000, Flashe and sponges on canvas, 66 by 82 inches. COLLECTION THE ARTIST.

Flashe paint manages these transitions with remarkable vividness, drying matte while maintaining a bracing chromatic intensity. The grief in the self-image is lightened by the figure's weightlessness in the painting's (outer) space and by the sensuality of the brush gestures filling each shape and ground. Other iconic self-portraits and portraits come to mind: Courbet's youthful *Le Désespéré* (The Desperate Man), 1843–45, with its bug-eyed expression; and Harry Callahan's photograph *Eleanor, Chicago* (1949), showing his wife crowned with ropy, wet hair as she stands neck-deep in water. Weatherford is amused enough by the lugubriousness of her own head-in-hands image to title one painting *Any Cat Stevens Song* (1996), suggesting that the soundtracks of our lives are attuned to our heartbreak as much as to our bliss.

Weatherford's expressive paint handling opened up further when she moved back to California in 1999. That was also when her paintings started responding formally to her natural environment. She generated visual tone poems of the coast, stacking shapes and bands of color into drastically simplified images of sand, sea, sky, and sun. In *beach* (2000), a five-foot-high painting, the order goes from bottom to top: dark head silhouette (touching the bottom edge), yellow sand, curving blue sea/sky, huge orange-pink cloud. It's an order not unlike that of *Night and Day*, but in spite of the wavering edges of each border, the horizon line situates us in a landscape rather than the semiotic outer space of the earlier painting. Some of the Margaret heads from 1996 also situate us in a "scape" of some kind. We are looking in the same direction as she is, from behind her. But there is little or no spatial orientation in the allover chromatic weather that surrounds her.

Around this same time, Weatherford began affixing sponges to her paintings. An obvious nod to Yves Klein's "Sponge Reliefs" (1959–61), these sponge works are conceptually mutable, evoking the sea, heads, stones, and even potatoes. The clumpy invertebrates are appropriative, sure, but they serve a distinct aesthetic purpose. As the title of *absorbent* (2000) implies, the sponges soak up color and push it into real space, much as the silkscreened chrysanthemum in the trompe l'oeil *Third Riddle* promises to do.

The sponge paintings represent the apogee of Weatherford's bricolage practice before she began the neon paintings. Yet she continued to attach starfish and shells here and there, as she delved further into painterly mark-making to create a kind of caricature. Cartoonish essentialism runs through her sunsets, moonrises over brick walls (LA is a city of alleyways), and—in a couple of cases featuring compressed Franz Kline brushstrokes—quick, hilariously accurate portraits of a black cat that haunted her backyard. The eyes are tiny iridescent seashells with a black stroke for the pupil. This first half-decade back in California, spent stretching out with paint, seems to have prepared her to make the leap into a loose, tactilely rich painting from observation. That shift meant an increase in surface incident, achieved by layering washes in a way that leaves the color underneath showing through—the ton sur ton of Bonnard updated via the epic stain painting of Frankenthaler and Louis.

In 2004 Weatherford started painting the light and shadow of the day through a huge thicket of vines that had overtaken a trellis in her front yard. The Tang exhibition includes the *ivy mesh* (2004) on the salon wall. It's a small horizontal painting with gray-green vines and leaves emerging into foreground light and disappearing into black shadow. As these works expanded somewhat in scale, the dark background began to serve as a volumetric midway passage, yielding to light behind the thicket. Flickers of light flutter around the shadowed space like moths, a Corot effect pushed

Westfall, Stephen, “Beyond Neon: Mary Weatherford’s abstraction is rooted in a sense of place,” *ARTnews.com*, Art in America, April 15, 2020

Mary Weatherford: *Ruby I (Thriftimart)*, 2012, Flashe and neon on linen, 93 by 79 inches. HAMMER MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES.

to the level of Charles Burchfield’s *The Coming of Spring* (1917–43), in which every tree, hillock, and flower seems to have an individual soul. The vine paintings never reached large scale, which suits their scrutiny-inviting intimacy. It’s a shame space wouldn’t allow more of these paintings in the show, as I find the whole series to be among the finest, gnarliest, and most specific paintings of vegetation in the last half-century.

OVERLAPPING THE TIMELINE of the Vine works is an extended series of paintings Weatherford made of rocks at Malibu’s Point Dume—two examples are at the Tang—and a subsequent series depicting a cave she found up the California coast in Pismo Beach. Only one of the Cave paintings is included in the exhibition, the labia-walled *Georgia* (2010), executed in multiple shades of blue, with a slyly clitoral starfish almost invisible at the top of the indigo cave-void. It’s an open letter to Georgia O’Keeffe with the starfish also recalling the stars in works by German-American Symbolist painter Agnes Pelton (1881–1961).[2] Weatherford would make plein air studies on paper at the sites and work on larger canvases in the studio. Treating the textures of rock as a Monet-like record of shifts in chromatic light, and rendering the contrast of glare and shadow in fluid and fast-drying paint, Weatherford became fluent in the polychromatic “action” techniques of staining and sponging. These were the basis for the blots and swipes that dance with the electrified tubes in the neon paintings.

The rock and cave works also have their antecedents in nineteenth-century French painting, notably Monet’s views of the natural bridge at Étretat on the Normandy Coast, Courbet’s sinewy cave paintings (he also made paintings of Étretat), and Degas’s landscape monotypes, some of which are nearly abstract. This deep history brings us to Weatherford’s engagement with Frankenthaler, herself a Francophile. Like her predecessor, Weatherford makes her large works on the floor, so she’s actually in the field of the painting.

Of the three neon paintings at the Tang, *Ruby I (Thriftimart)*, 2012, most evidently springs from the cave paintings. As in many of those works, a border surrounds the central build-up of red, blue, black, and black-violet washes that suggest a monadic void. Vertically traversing the center but bending slightly to the right toward the bottom is a tube of ruby neon, staining the dark pool of paint with its glow. To the left, a white cord drapes down to a transformer box on the floor. Nothing is concealed. And, as always with Weatherford, much is going on.

Discussing *From the Mountain to the Sea* (2014), the first of her paintings in which two neon tubes of different colors merge into one continuous line, the artist offered a peek into her crowded mind: “I have [Lucio] Fontana in my head. I have Mario Merz and Barry Le Va. Of course the cords are borrowed from Eva Hesse. It’s sort of a rotating card catalog going on up here [taps head].” Later in the same interview, she said: “I’m not painting a painting that’s finished and then putting neon on it. I’m painting with the expectation this element will be added.”[3]

Weatherford’s neon paintings have expanded into scapes that encompass treks up arroyos and allude to political violence. She regards the neon as something like a cut but also a lingering, compositional light[4]. The works reflect the influence of a chorus of predecessors, but they are always definitively shaped by her own mind, her own sorrows and exhilarations, her insomnia and clairvoyance. The glimpse of the city lights from the top of the canyon is her own song.

1 Bill Arning, “Weatherford’s Women,” in the forthcoming catalogue for the Tang exhibition. The volume will also include essays and poetry by artists Rebecca Morris and Arnold Kemp; an article by Elissa Auther, deputy director and chief curator of the Museum of Art and Design, New York; an interview with Tang director Ian Berry; and “East of the 5, South of the 10,” a story by Margaret Weatherford, the artist’s sister, who brilliantly imagines the LA area as a noir Olympus for the fallible Greek gods.
2 Works by this recently rediscovered artist are currently on display in “Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist,” at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, through June 28.
3 Mary Weatherford, “from the Mountain to the Sea: A CONVERSATION,” in Robert Faggen, Mary Weatherford: The Neon Paintings, Claremont, Calif., Gould Center for Humanistic Studies, Claremont McKenna College, and Munich, London, New York, DelMonico Books, Prestel Verlag, 2016, pp. 203–04.
4 Ibid., p. 202.

Wei, Lilly, “Mary Weatherford: Canyon–Daisy–Eden,” *StudioInternational.com*, March 9, 2020

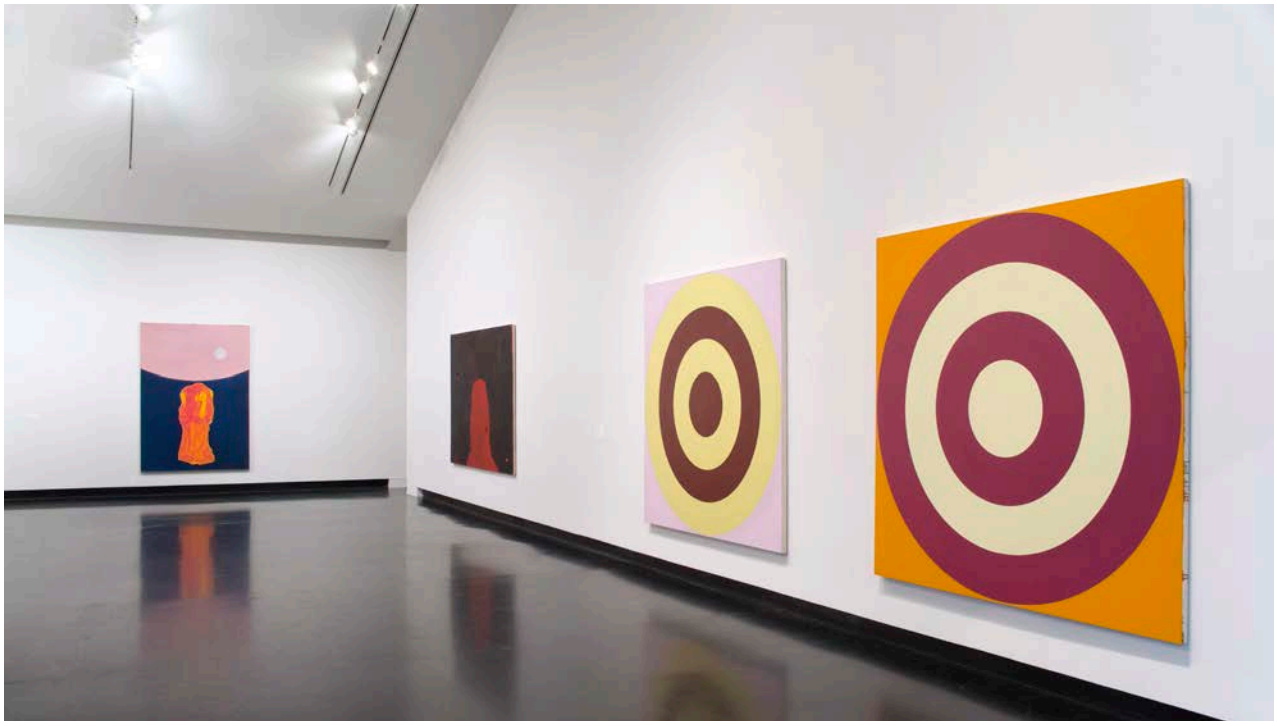
studio international

Mary Weatherford: Canyon–Daisy–Eden

This first survey show for the artist features work from 1989 to 2015 and reveals the experimental nature of her use of scale, colour and materials.

Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York. 1 February – 12 July 2020

By Lilly Wei | March 9, 2020



Mary Weatherford: *Canyon–Daisy–Eden*, installation view, Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, 2020. Photo: Arthur Evans.

Mary Weatherford: Canyon-Daisy-Eden seems to be an exhibition full of conundrums and oppositions. On the one hand, the paintings seem bold, even confrontational; on the other, there is a certain reserve, elusiveness and ambiguity. Ranging from abstract to representational, the silken to the roughed-up, their imagery hints at secrets, their surfaces strewn with private symbols and encoded visual language, clues to more biographical readings. Titles and text matter, although they, too, are enigmatic. Canyon-Daisy-Eden, Weatherford explains, are the names of paintings and, together, they form a brief poem. But I suspect that Weatherford is an unreliable narrator, deliberately so, and that the mingling of the fictive and the real constitutes a great part of her work’s pleasures, of its uncanniness and resistance to revelation at the same time as it reveals.

Opposition also applies to scale. The paintings’ assertiveness is due partly to their size. Several here are three metres (10 feet) across, and she can go much further. Weatherford has said that she has always been comfortable working large. But then she might zoom down to formats a couple of hand-spans in measurement. More than two dozen of such (mostly) smaller works are installed together salon-style, functioning like a lexicon of her practice. Or she might detail, placing objects such as sponges on the painted surface, just so, or tiny shells and the minuscule starfish that abound, say, in the immersive, blue-washed vertical, *10.26* (1998), which Weatherford uses as an emblem of self-regeneration and healing, of recurrence. She elides sea and sky, water and air in this ethereal, levitating painting, and the starfish become stars, myth.

This is Weatherford’s first survey exhibition. Co-curated by the Houston-based Bill Arning and Ian Berry, the director of the Tang, it is on view at the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs until 12 July, and features work from 1989 to 2015. The earliest are a pair of handsome target paintings and part of a series based on opera and ballet heroines, their geometry accompanied by a story. The canvases, alternating broad rings of slightly raised yellow and maroon on a monochromatic ground are a nod to Jasper Johns and Cady Noland, although not intentionally, Weatherford says. But provocatively titled Nagasaki, the targets also conjure the city destroyed by the dropping of the second atomic bomb three days after Hiroshima as well as the setting for Puccini’s Madam Butterfly. In addition, the circles suggest tree rings, or “circular time,” as Arning describes

Mary Weatherford. *Georgia*, 2010. Flashe and starfish on linen, 44 x 50 in. Private collection. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen Studio.

it, the peg on which the overall installation is hung, and not on a chronological order. The works, Berry adds, are visible from several vantage points within the divisions of the gallery to encourage a sense of continuity that is not strictly linear in sequence.

From the Cave Painting series, there is *Big Red Margaret Head* (1997). It’s the first and portrays what seems to be a solitary giant head. Occupying nearly a third of the picture plane, wrapped in a red scarf (we might think burqa today), it seems to look into the beckoning, seductive blackness of the ground. It is named for her sister and pinned with a starfish, its poignancy all the more powerful since the feeling it emanates is mercurial, as it reverberates between intimations of mortality and immortality, of agency and fate.

Another from the series is *Georgia* (2010), in shades of blue, black, white and grey, named for O’Keeffe, in which the central space of what suggests a grotto is both a void and opaque, sheltering and yet ominous. It reminds us that grotto is a corruption of crypt and also the root for grotesque, grotesquerie, linked to the irregularity of forms that characterise the baroque and rococo.

But it is the three works from the series begun in 2012, the Bakersfield Project (shown at Gagosian Chelsea in 2018), that are the highlights of the show. Inspired by the bright illuminated signage of the city, *Ruby 1 (Thriftimart)* (2012), *Canyon* (2014) and *Lovely Day* (2015) are made of marble dust stirred into white gesso for subtle shimmer and Flashe, a signature medium, which Weatherford loves for its malleability, richness and range of colours. The paint is sponged, smeared, poured, wiped, going from gossamer to matte, the colours strung across the spectrum, mutating from diaphanous to plush to dense patches of paint to bare support, in conversation with Helen Frankenthaler and Joan Mitchell, among others. To these surfaces, slender neon-filled glass rods, which are made to order, and their dangling cords are added, like three-dimensional line drawings hovering in space, emitting sizzling, quicksilver streaks of luminosity, the urban intersecting with nature, her own lightning fields. They also made me think how site-specific Weatherford’s work is, how steeped in romanticism, there at the edge of the continent where American dreams begin and end.

Walker, Hamza, “Mary Weatherford,” *BOMB*, Summer 2019, pp. cover, 33-43

Walker, Hamza, “Mary Weatherford,” *BOMB*, Summer 2019, pp. cover, 33-43

Mary Weatherford by Hamza Walker

Athena, 2018, Flashe and neon on linen, 117 × 104 inches. Photos by Fredrik Nilsen studio. Images courtesy of the artist and Gagosian Gallery.

Walker, Hamza, “Mary Weatherford,” *BOMB*, Summer 2019, pp. cover, 33-43

Curator Hamza Walker visited Mary Weatherford's Los Angeles studio this past April to record the following conversation.

HAMZA WALKER Do you see yourself participating in a painterly tradition that is particularly American—one that goes by the name of gestural abstraction? An American painting, does that mean something to you?

MARY WEATHERFORD Yes.

HW "Yes"—I like it. As much as you don't want to admit it. You're letting your hair down. Who was it that Edvard Munch painted? Salome. You look kind of like her right now. Let the record show.

MW The defendant always has to say it for the record.

HW Are you guilty of making American paintings?

MW That was the whole point. I'd say in 1985 or '86 I had a sit-down with myself and asked, "What's the project here?" I tried to chart a course by examining my circumstances, sort of like the Patti Smith song, "... at heart, I'm an American..." My received knowledge of art history was straight Western canon; I failed to take the pre-Columbian or Chinese art history courses, though there were great opportunities to do so. I was under the spell of the West.

So, what do Americans do? Paint big paintings. Of course, we know that there are enormous French and Italian paintings, but the history pill I swallowed is that Americans took painting off the easel, which is not true. Artists did that a long time ago, inside caves, other places, in other parts of the world.

HW Before there was an easel.

MW I was interested in what my part in the feminist project could be. I was living in New York and I was in the Whitney Program. Art that was grabbing my attention was outside of painting: Louise Lawler, Cindy Sherman, Martha Rosler. The work that felt important—film is included in that—was outside of the big tent, the big boardroom of paint. I decided to work in the tradition of the large American painting. In 1991, I made a painting that was six by eleven feet. It was almost done once I decided the size.

HW The scale was content, in a sense.

MW Most of the paintings from '89 are five by ten feet. The reason is that they came apart into two five-by-five foot squares, and I had enough strength to lift them by myself. I could put one on the wall on nails, holding the painting with one foot underneath and my hand on top.

HW I like your flat foot in this; what's so American in American painting? And your unquestioning answer: Scale. But tell me how you paint. One of the things I fixate on with your paintings is that you engage, at a formal level, with a particular moment, the tail end of the comet of triumphal American abstraction—gestural abstraction into Color Field painting.

MW There is a book called *The Triumph of American Painting*. Even as a teenager I knew this would be questioned. How can painting triumph? Sherrie Levine was the Trojan horse—ideas spilling out.

HW Wow, I wasn't expecting that. So you think of your engagement as—

MW —one-hundred-percent critical.

HW Meaning in quotation marks?

MW That's where it's getting slippery. Are these paintings sincere or are they paintings of paintings? They are sincere. But here's the problem, Hamza... Let's get out of the realm of painting and move over into something that we can use as a metaphor, like a novel or poetry.

HW You seem to suggest that it isn't a question of you being an heir in any direct sense to a triumphal American gestural painting. It's not as simple as that.

MW No. And I'm not that heir.

HW You inherited painting as a text, so to speak, as something that is read as much as it's seen.

MW Well put.

HW How innocent as viewers of gestural abstraction could we possibly have been? As though painting was as fresh as it was in 1948. But you inherited these paintings of the New York School in the opposite way, in quite a heavily mediated fashion.

MW We can't unknow history—we can't unknow the Vietnam War. I wasn't naively thinking, There is unfinished business in Pollock. That's not where I came from.

HW But at the same time, that would suggest casting your project as ironic.

MW But it's not.

HW Right. So basically, you were at the edge of an uncritical relationship to gestural abstraction versus a critical relationship to gestural abstraction, but yet not falling quite into postmodern irony. The words *serious* and *sincere* are very telling in terms of how we tend to read paintings.

Walker, Hamza, “Mary Weatherford,” *BOMB*, Summer 2019, pp. cover, 33-43

MW A big influence for me was Moira Dryer. She stayed out of the big tent by painting on plywood and cutting it into shapes—messing with painting like Frank Stella by way of Nancy Graves or Ree Morten. I wanted to use feminine imagery—like flowers—and paint, to put these two things together. Over the years it morphed into collage and then that lit up with neon. It's a complicated question. I am trying to paint like I can make *Citizen Kane*.

HW I like that.

MW It's like George Eliot, who turned out to be a woman.

HW But the name George Eliot wasn't replaced by Mary Ann Evans, her actual name—even now that we know that she was a woman.

MW You picked the most difficult topic. But I guess you have to go there.

HW It was just a lead-in. (*laughter*)

Do you have a relationship to the Greenbergian narrative of Modernism?

MW Everybody does! I can't unknow my education. Of course I have a relationship to "Modernism reveals the means of its own making." There are a lot of moves I make in the paintings that are one-hundred-percent *that*. I was in the architecture department at Princeton for a while and I learned how "form follows function." Brooklyn Bridge, Meyer bridges... The most beautiful bridge is the bridge that works. My work is nothing more than a trace of my trajectory from cradle to grave.

HW As I said earlier, the tail end of that comet of American gestural abstraction is Color Field painting—

MW Let's talk about that. What is the tail end of that comet? It's mainly out of Washington, DC, right? Color Field painting is Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, influenced by Helen Frankenthaler.

HW Jules Olitski.

MW Then Gene Davis and Sam Gilliam. Is Sam further down the tail of the comet? I never saw his work in person until a few years ago, but in the far reaches of my memory I remember those draped stainy things in some *Artforum*. And they got a hook on the coat rack of my memory.

HW This is exactly what I want to talk about. I want to zero in on how you paint. You mention Sam Gilliam, the nature of abandoning the support, and the kind of narrative, reductivist logic of painting. What were those characteristics? Can you reduce painting to color and shape? What are the characteristics that are unique to painting as an art form? Sam Gilliam fits into that reductive logic and narrative. And there is another phase after—

MW I was familiar with the artists at Paula Cooper Gallery because I worked there in the 1980s. I love Alan Shields's work. He became a Shelter Island ferry captain. I have a background in craft from sewing my own clothes growing up. I made tie-dye, I made macramé, I wove, I crocheted, I dyed yarns. All of this is coming together—my Southern California craftiness and painting.

HW How concerned are you with composition?

MW It's key. To think about it: Larry Poons is and is not, and Gilliam is not and is. Howardina Pindell is not until she is interested in the composition at the very edge.

HW What's your relationship with the edges of your paintings?

MW It says everything. We forgot to add Sam Francis into the Color Field group. That's what makes it a hardcover novel. I'm not handing out leaflets. I'm like, You've got to take me seriously because I've got composition!

HW (*laughter*) You went from the hardcover to the leaflets, but there's a lot in between. Like softcover—

MW Ha. Leaflets were often more effective than hardcover.

HW With the hardcover metaphor, are you also referring to the painting as an object with a solid structure?

MW Yeah, a painting is on stretcher bars.

HW So a painting is hardcover by virtue of being on that frame?

MW Well, I'm kind of jealous of the person throwing leaflets out the window.

HW Would that be Gilliam in a way?

MW Sure. You and I can make a chart of who's throwing leaflets out the window and who's hardcover.

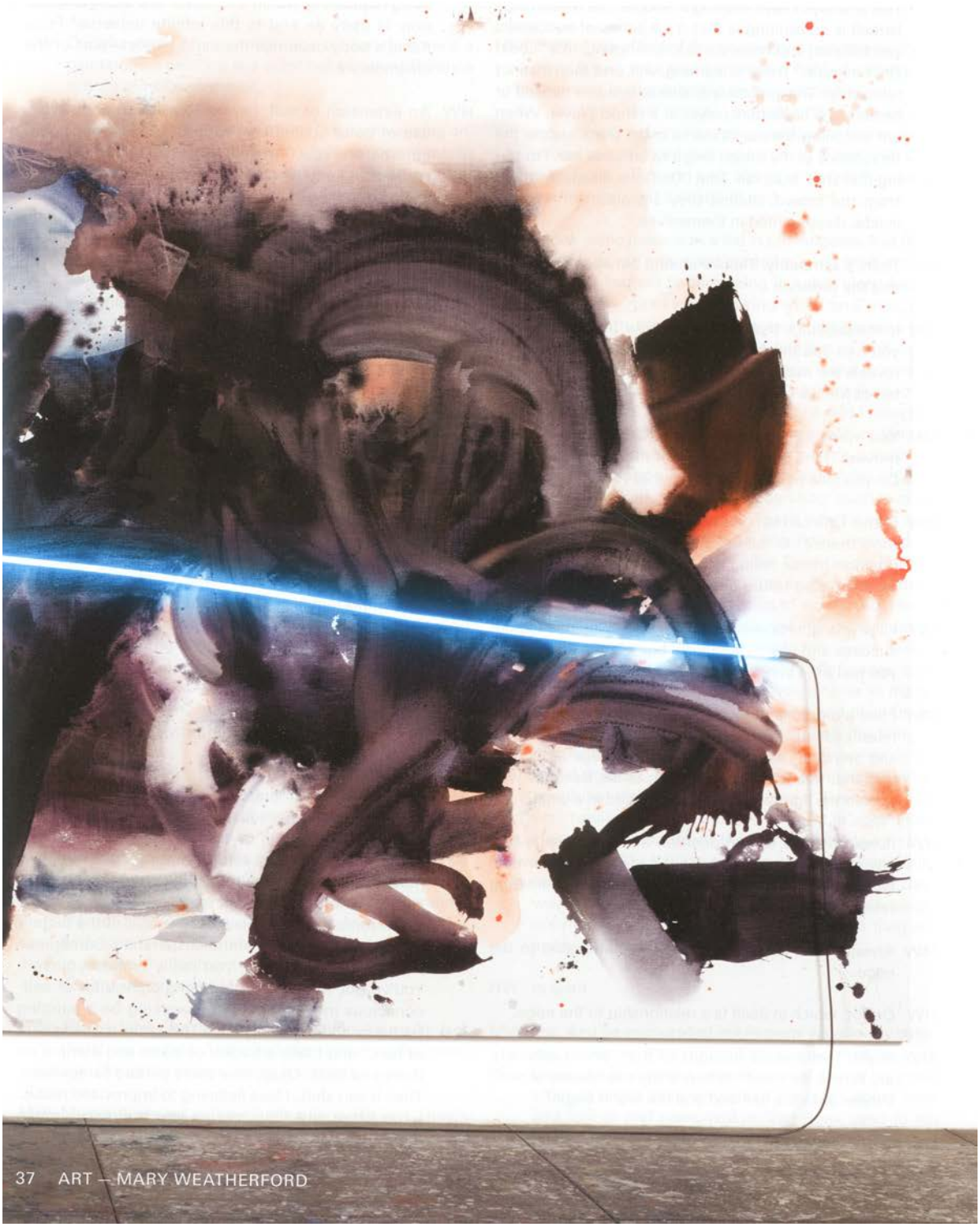
HW There seems to be a discrepancy, though, between the paint itself and the support.

MW The tension between the tissue-paper-thin paint and the substantial linen is interesting. If I deliver something that's almost not there *and* so very there, it's problematic, in a good way. A difference between my work and Color Field work is that I gesso the ground. It's a technical variant, but it's important because

Walker, Hamza, “Mary Weatherford,” *BOMB*, Summer 2019, pp. cover, 33-43

The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars (Take the A Train), 2018, Flashe and neon on linen, 117 × 234 inches.

Walker, Hamza, “Mary Weatherford,” *BOMB*, Summer 2019, pp. cover, 33-43



Walker, Hamza, “Mary Weatherford,” *BOMB*, Summer 2019, pp. cover, 33-43

in Color Field, the ground is raw fabric, so the color soaks in—the Greenbergian idea of pure color. I became less interested in what paint could do on its own and more interested in seeing the trace of will. This is where I have to bring in sports. The reason basketball is so exciting is that it's a series of successes and failures, and there's a risk in shooting, like "Look! Oh, I missed." There is learning, will, and then instinct takes over. The spectator is able to imagine himself or herself as a basketball player or a tennis player. When I'm watching Serena Williams make decisions, in the far reaches of my mind I begin to embody her. I'm trying that shot, but I fail. That "Oh!", the disappointment from the crowd, means they are also, somewhere inside, disappointed in themselves.

HW There's sympathy. There's a bond between the player and the observer.

MW In the paintings that I'm making now, in their thinness, you can see the moves and decisions. The painting reveals the means of its making. Back to Modernism, but to me it's true to the way of sports.

HW You want agency, engagement, showing all your moves. There's a player present making the painting. Do you lose paintings working that way?

MW Some. One can set up a rule and if the rule is followed, then there's no failure. But I have an internal composition meter telling me, between color and form, whether it's a failure or success.

HW I like your sports analogy. One could think of absolute success and absolute failure, but it's a great game if you pull off a victory with 98 to 94.

MW I like a close game. I make the paintings harder and harder for myself. I also experiment with the lights and one day, I saw one going off the edge and I realized that this was the next thing to do. Because why should the light be captured like a bird in a cage?

HW If we go back to composition and your tissue-thin layers, to what extent does the structure determine composition? Your paintings have a really interesting relationship to the edge.

MW Always. Everything is about the relationship to the edge.

HW Or not, which in itself is a relationship to the edge.

MW Right. I've always thought of that, philosophically, as, Where do I end? Where's the membrane of self? Where does the self end and the world begin?

HW The world as the structure that's a given. So in terms of the self, do you think of the support, the canvas, as the world into which one is cast?

MW Yes. I construct a frame and then painting is a game of Pong happening within the frame. It's also the question: Is there an end to this infinite universe? Frida Kahlo's body becomes the earth almost—part of the environment.

HW An extension of self. I want to ask you about your use of color again. It's beautiful to see your paintings before you turn the neon on, but they're not really doing anything before they're turned on. I was shocked by how much the neon light reveals the translucent nature of the paint layers. I could see through them! Do you have to hunt for the right color of light for each painting?

MW That's way harder than painting the painting.

HW So you cycle through different colors?

MW I make patterns out of paper ranging from eighteen inches to ten feet long. I have boxes of different colors of glass tubes. Then I say, "I want these lengths and shapes out of white or half sunflower yellow and half saffron yellow; these out of uncoated ultramarine or coated ultramarine." I have an inventory of colors and shapes to play with. Then I ask myself, Does this do anything for the painting? That usually takes a long time to determine. Sometimes it's instantaneous.

HW How important is positioning the lights?

MW I don't want the painting to be a ground for the light. Two things, paint and light, are coming together to create a third thing.

HW To what extent is there an improvisatory approach to making a painting?

MW Completely. Parameters are set, and the only choice I make is—and I have just a general idea—do I make this painting empty, or do I make a full painting? Sometimes, starting a full painting, the first few moves are so good that I walk away and leave it as an empty painting. Or I set out to make a yellow painting, and it turns out to be black. The magic of the picture is in the not knowing, in the desperation. Sometimes I think, My god, Mary, you really limited yourself. You've got to override this conglomeration of self-conscious moves. I could be working on a painting for hours and say to myself, "This really is a lacework of fear," and I take a bucket of water and dump it on there and think, Okay, now we're getting somewhere. Then it can shift. I love listening to improvised music. I can listen and there are people that know much more than I do.

Walker, Hamza, “Mary Weatherford,” *BOMB*, Summer 2019, pp. cover, 33-43

In the paintings that I'm making now, in their thinness, you can see the moves and decisions. The painting reveals the means of its making. Back to Modernism, but to me it's true to the way of sports.

HW Do you think of your paintings as serial—where a painting is a painting is a painting? Where difference is born out of sameness?

MW Oh, yeah. The train yard paintings I've been working on, they are night paintings, ranging from dark deep purple to black. They are a series. There are about a dozen vertical black paintings with white lights. They are kind of depicting a train yard at night. There's the clanging of bells and whistles and sounds of the trains. There's always sound that enters when I'm thinking about a painting. To me they have sound. You can identify which painting was painted three years ago and which was painted last week, but they are all very similar.

HW I wasn't so much referring to a series per se as much as to an approach. Is there an ur-painting? Do you think, That one is so beautiful and I want to go back to that place?

MW Oh yes, I do that all the time. But it never works. You can't go back. The paintings are changing by themselves and I don't have anything to do with it. I just show up. It's both upsetting and wonderful to see the paintings change without my permission, without my willing them to do so.

HW Are your body and the gesture of action painting an ultimate parameter for you?

MW Oh sure. I think I won't be able to make these twenty years from now, but then I look at Cy Twombly and think, maybe.

HW Do you consider your paintings performative?

MW Yeah, I really like the Japanese Gutai painter, Shiraga. Think about Yves Klein as the flipside of that. He used women's bodies to make paintings. I mean, my hands and feet are in the painting. It's not like with Pollock. It's not Morris Louis, though it happens on the ground. It's not like Twombly, it's not Joan Mitchell. I paint with bare feet, I walk about in the paintings, but I try to remove the footprint. If it's there, it's an accident. I don't want to be coy in that way.

HW The performative seems subordinate to the result. Not that there's a split. At the end the painting is the painting. The performative nature is implicit.

MW My paintings are without instructions, it's just: Here's the paint!

HW Part of the effect of the paintings is freedom or liberation. It's an area that becomes a field of activity and that area is simply as big as it needs to be.

Let's shift topics. Until recently, I had no idea you played music. You really dropped a bomb on me when you revealed that you studied guitar with Dave Van Ronk. Can you talk about your relationship to roots music and folk and blues?

MW I took piano lessons as a kid in Los Angeles, and then I got a little red guitar and started playing it when I was young. I learned fingerpicking in junior high. Around '96 in New York I was speaking with Dan Zanes, who played with the Del Fuegos and then became Dan Zanes who plays for kids. He suggested I go to his guitar teacher. I left a voice message and a few weeks later I get a phone call, and there's a gravelly voice on the other end: "This is Dave Van Ronk and I have time for lessons." So I went to his apartment and played something for him. I took lessons once a week for three years and slowly learned his repertoire.

Van Ronk sang in a barbershop quartet in the Bronx when he was young. That's why he was such a brilliant arranger. Through Van Ronk I learned the history of the roots of jazz. What Dave taught me was: Guitar is not important; it's the human voice that's important. So you have to learn to sing. I could never do that. Somehow my voice and my guitar playing could never come together, maybe because I haven't practiced enough. I memorized a lot of songs and I would sing them poorly. But he would never let me get away with just playing. I had to sing and play. Once I came to him and said, "I started writing this song..." and he said, "No! There are too many songs in the world already." That was his thing. He maybe wrote a handful of pieces in his whole career. Everything else was traditional or he brought it along in adaptation. He arranged "House of the Rising Sun," taught it to Bob Dylan. Then Dylan put "House of the Rising Sun" on his first album without asking Dave, and so Dave was always mad about that. I think Van Ronk taught me more about art and how to be an artist than any instructor I ever had.

HW In spirit.

MW Yes. And he encouraged me in many ways in my painting. I think my painting got better while studying with Dave and just seeing what it looked like to be a real artist. It might have influenced my ideas about form and format and composition. Van Ronk used to tell this story about how they were driving the Reverend

Walker, Hamza, “Mary Weatherford,” *BOMB*, Summer 2019, pp. cover, 33-43

40 Studio view of “Train Yard” series, 2016-2019, each painting Flashe and neon on linen, 112 × 99 inches.

Walker, Hamza, “Mary Weatherford,” *BOMB*, Summer 2019, pp. cover, 33-43

Walker, Hamza, “Mary Weatherford,” *BOMB*, Summer 2019, pp. cover, 33-43

Gary Davis around. Once they drove from Boston and Davis was in the back seat playing "Candy Man," which has this picking pattern with a funny transition between two different chords. Davis was playing "Candy Man" over and over and over and Dave said, "You can't really turn around and tell Gary Davis to stop." But then they realized he was asleep. He was playing in his sleep, according to this story. The point being: when you learn something perfectly, you have freedom, you can play in your sleep.

HW I like how this music is interwoven with the quotidian as a source of inspiration—for the aboutness of your paintings.

MW "Jumped in the river, and I started to drown, thought about my baby and I turned around." Like that?

HW There we have it. Recently having done, with Josh Kuhn, a series of artist interviews built around the game show Name that Tune—artists who have a specific relationship to music, not artists whose work is about music per se—you would have not come to my mind.

MW I don't wear it on my sleeve.

HW Most people don't know how much of a blues gal you are.

MW Well, I don't know as much about Delta Blues as I think I should.

HW But you've played it, on guitar! And having been taught by one of the folk music revival legends, it's a different kind of knowing. Can you play one of your favorite songs?

MW I can only play one that I know. I haven't practiced, but let's see. (*picks up guitar, tuning it*)

HW (*shouts*) Green Green Rocky Road! I'm the belligerent audience member. (*sings along to her guitar playing*) I was joking asking for that song. I'm blown away that you can actually do it!

(*singing together*)

MW I need to practice. My fingers are soft again. I'm not a natural musician and I don't expect myself to be. Here's my book of what Dave taught me. Lessons would last an hour if I had practiced, or fifteen minutes if I hadn't practiced. The price was $30 until he apologetically raised it to $35. I was being with greatness for $35 a week. Dave would sit on the couch with a novel and his guitar next to him. He would drink iced coffee with a straw and smoke, and he had a pot of something cooking on the stove. That was his world. He was one of the most well-read people I've met.

42 *The Ocean Is in the Sky*, 1994, starfish, Flashe, molding, and paste on jute, 39 × 54 inches.

Walker, Hamza, "Mary Weatherford," *BOMB*, Summer 2019, pp. cover, 33-43

The blues, the kind of music where there's narrative, a story, and a form to it, a chorus, let's say... Going to the Whitney Program and thinking about art, there was a trajectory into the unknown of more advanced thought. Studying with Van Ronk, there's no advancement. There's a betterment of beauty and artistry and depth of poetry. It's not critical.

HW Playing music was more than a hobby for you. It held lessons for ways of being. It was a counterpoint to your studies at the Whitney.

MW It humanized my art—the reverence for storytelling and nuance, the human voice and improvisation. It was right around when I was making the starfish paintings and was working in my apartment. I almost had the relationship to my artwork that Van Ronk had to his guitar—I decided the best time to paint was in my pajamas. I had a job, but I wanted to be as close to dreaming as I could, so I wanted to work in my apartment. Learning these songs brought the poetry into my work.

HW And accessibility and openness. The blues as a rudimentary form—

MW Here's a good example. I just got back from San Francisco where I made four prints at Crown Point Press. They are called *The Bather*, *The Frog*, *The Robot*, and *The Walls of Dis*. If you can follow this line of thinking, it's part of my feminist project. When I looked at the print, I said, "I see a frog." In art school, when someone comes to your studio and says, "I see a frog," you reply, "Oh, no, no, this is not a frog, this is abstraction." I considered "seeing something" amateurish. Now, I think, the older one gets, one can say, it looks like a frog, or a robot, or a bather. So that naming—like, "That cloud looks like a bunny rabbit!"—that's child's play. But then you play "Green, Green Rocky Road," and that's a child's clapping song. It was a poet who brought it to Van Ronk.

HW It seems like part of Modernism in terms of getting at the fundamental basis of color and shape, but does that have a relationship to teaching, children, and nursery rhymes because of its fundamental nature?

MW Maybe I'm overemphasizing the childlike stuff. The blues is the blues. There's that great Angela Davis anthology of the lyrics of Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey and Lady Day. It's all their lyrics and Davis writes about them. I have a lot of deference for these songwriters. With these songs, I wonder, Is it autobiography, is it theater? I guess painting for me is like writing songs. I think of them musically, some of the big ones are quite orchestral. So there is a relationship to music. I don't want to make it too strong, it's just there.

HW You're close enough to hitting the nail on the head for me.

MW But where is the nail, you know? It has something to do with being mature enough, and that's such an icky word, but being kind of old enough to say, "Look, it's a frog." And then let's talk about frogs and robots, and aliens. I've made paintings of alienation before. And the *Walls of Dis* is from Dante, by way of Smithson.

HW Which bears the question of your relationship to irony. I never think of you as ironic.

MW Perhaps there was a time when people thought I was.

HW To what extent did you indulge to think you were ironic?

MW In an interview with Alex Israel, we talk about my candy-colored cave paintings. We talk about Laguna Beach and seaside kitsch paintings. I don't know how this all ties together. Can it all be in there, in a kind of long tragedy of life? I mean the whole... at a certain age... I'm on the other side of the mountain, on the slide to the grave. It's been great.

HW We're not there yet, sister! (*laughter*)

MW I have one foot in the grave and I paint like I do. I learned a lot of stuff from the blues. Do you know what the bearing ground is? It's the burying ground. I always thought it was packed soil. I think that's what people see in the paintings. I mean, isn't that the sublime?

HW Right. I think it's a beautiful word to use because scale is very important.

MW It's like Van Ronk's version of "Hang Me," right?

Hang me, oh hang me
I'll be dead and gone
Hang me, oh hang me
I'll be dead and gone
Wouldn't mind the hanging
But the layin' in the grave so long, poor boy
I been all around this world

I don't want to put too fine a point on it, but it's there.

HW It's more in the *how* he's singing it than the what he's singing.

MW That's it. It's about *how* the painting is painted. I try to move it beyond words.

“Museum Previews: Mary Weatherford,” *Art in America*, August 2019, p. 41

Mary Weatherford: *Canyon*, 2014. Flashe and neon on linen, 112 by 99 inches.

Mary Weatherford

The dramatic canvases of Mary Weatherford build on the gestural vocabulary of Abstract Expressionism, often with her characteristic addition of glowing tubes of neon, which serve as a kind of abstract drawing and a physical reminder of light's effects on color. This thirty-year survey emphasizes Weatherford's engagement with cultural references, such as opera and Greek mythology, as well as her engagement – in various suites of works – with the visual properties of the locales where she has worked.

Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Saratoga Springs, N.Y., Feb. 8–June 27, 2020; SITE Santa Fe, Oct. 16, 2020–Feb. 28, 2021.

Peterson, Jennifer, “Mary Weatherford,” *Gagosian*, Fall 2018, pp. 60-68

WORK IN PROGRESS

MARY WEATHERFORD

With preparations underway for an exhibition this September, we visit the artist’s California studio. She speaks with Jennifer Peterson about her new work, studio process, and the artists who have inspired her. Photography by Fredrik Nilsen Studio.

Peterson, Jennifer, “Mary Weatherford,” *Gagosian*, Fall 2018, pp. 60-68

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JENNIFER PETERSON This new show is a collection of big paintings. Can you describe your working process?

MARY WEATHERFORD To start from the beginning, I've seen the fields where flax is grown in Belgium. And from flax is made linen. I have the linen woven for me at a mill in Belgium, so it's a very special linen, it's rough. There are hills and valleys to it. I'm leading you through from the ground up, as it were.

JP Starting with the materials.

MW We could do an entire interview on linen, and why it's special to me. I grew up sewing. I learned a lot about fabrics from my mother. The first time I saw this linen, at New York Central Art Supply in the 1990s, I thought, "I don't have to do much to this to make a good painting, because it's already incredibly beautiful."

JP But then of course you do prepare it, extensively.

MW I got John Zurier's secret formula for doctoring up the gesso. I want the paintings to have the transparency of my ink drawings. So this ground has an absorbency to it, but if I make it too absorbent, the colors are dull, and if I don't make it absorbent enough, the colors sit on the surface.

JP Some of the paintings are the same size and double-square format as your commission for Claremont McKenna College in 2014.

MW *from the Mountain to the Sea*, the painting for the dining room at the college's Athenaeum. I love dining room paintings. There was one in the cafeteria at the LA County Museum of Art when I was a kid. I would sit there and eat coconut cream pie after my art class and look at the big painting. What's the most famous cafeteria painting of all time?

JP I'm not sure.

MW *The Last Supper.*

JP That's some cafeteria.

MW There's a [José Clemente] Orozco at Pomona College that was painted in situ. *Prometheus.* The students eat with this *incredible* mural. Looking at paintings in museums is sometimes such a ripoff, I don't get to exist with them for long. I have a technique: if there's a bench and not many people around, I try to just take a nap and then wake up and see the painting. I try to have the experience of looking away and coming back. If I go to a museum, especially in Europe when I know I'm only going to be there once, I visit the gift shop, look at the postcards, determine which paintings in the museum are the great paintings, then go into the galleries and look at the paintings, and then I go back to the gift shop. I read up. Then I go to the café; then I go back to the museum. It's a whole long process. The *best* thing would be a painting in your

Previous spread:
Mary Weatherford in her studio, Los Angeles, CA, July 2018

Peterson, Jennifer, "Mary Weatherford," *Gagosian*, Fall 2018, pp. 60-68

dining hall, like the Picasso that used to be at the Four Seasons.

JP So you're giving a durational aspect to painting, which isn't usually thought of as a durational medium in the way that, say, film is.

MW Yes.

JP But in fact painting is durational. There are so many open-ended kinds of experiences you can have with paintings. But we don't always get to have food with paintings, and you're saying you particularly like eating as an experience that goes with painting?

MW Definitely. I was in somebody's apartment and they had Dubuffets in their dining room. What a great thing. I have a painting in my kitchen that I'm so fond of that I sit and eat and look at.

JP You've said your paintings aren't landscape paintings. I think they resonate more with history painting.

MW These are getting figurative. I kept trying to say they weren't landscape paintings, and now I'm proving it. I love history painting, like Veronese's *Wedding Feast at Cana*. I made this one about Teotihuacán—

JP This silver-and-yellow painting?

MW —after a symposium at LACMA about the discoveries there. Mayan and Aztec cultures showed up in the picture. Teotihuacán was a grand city. A population of a hundred thousand, trading with other cultures down on the coast, on the peninsula. . . .

JP The Yucatán.

MW Yes. They found turquoise in Teotihuacán. The closest turquoise mine is in New Mexico.

JP You were thinking about the history of Teotihuacán?

MW Yes. I think there were a couple of things: history, and I'd already made some bright paintings and needed to make a gray one.

JP Something to absorb or give a pause.

MW Yes. If you look at a Matisse or a Gauguin, or any bright-colored painting, the way they keep it from being garish is to use gray. Your eye doesn't realize, "Oh there's some gray in it," but what gray does is, it quiets down parts of the painting so that the very bright parts can sing. And that holds true for an exhibition as well.

JP What other historical elements were you thinking of? Tell me about these shapes.

MW These all seem to be magical creatures. I want to see a jaguar there. The jaguar is important in the Yucatán, in pre-Columbian art. I saw all that stuff at the Museo Antropología with my ninth-grade Spanish class.

JP The Museo Antropología in Mexico City? A field trip?

MW We were really turned loose there. It was a trip that kids couldn't take today. I mean, I went to the bazaar in Mexico City *by myself*. We had a free day and—

JP That is amazing. It definitely wouldn't happen today.

MW I still have the dress I bought.

JP Well, this is part of your landscapes—

MW And we went to the pyramids. Back then they had a light show. I mean, it was really the 1970s.

JP This is part of what I think is distinctive about your work. You're informed by European art history, but your work features a different geography in your references to California. And now you're talking about Mexico.

MW I think so. New York painters are more attached to Europe.

JP Color is one of the things I wanted to ask you to talk more about. You say red is hard to paint in. I can't think of a color that would *not* be difficult to work with, really.

MW Blue.

JP Tell me why blue might seem more manageable to you?

MW There's a painting for the show that's 100 percent cobalt blue, with a little corner of a more lavender blue. I conceived it when I was in bed for ten days with a terrible flu. It was the first of these big, double-square, mural-sized paintings in the series. I thought, "I'm going to make a completely cobalt blue painting. Just straight cobalt blue, that's what it's going to be." And I came in—I was probably still sick—but I came in and worked all day. I put a lot of water in it. And it's just—just *beautiful*. I thought that it was going to be difficult to coax a painting out of one color that wasn't black, because with black you can go all the way from white through all the tones—

JP The grays.

MW Essentially, I was cutting off the piano keyboard below middle C. If you're using just cobalt blue, you're operating from middle C all the way on up.

JP Right, because the blacks aren't in there.

MW So you take out the bass. A lot of times I think of colors as musical notes. I think of paintings as chords, trying to hit an emotional chord. That's the reason colors can so easily be thought of as notes. That's an Agnes Pelton thing.

JP Yeah.

MW And the reason they can be thought of as notes so easily is that color is relative. Even the white you put down counts. Every color hits an emotional note. But the note, the color with another color next to it, then makes a chord. So you can have a major chord or a minor chord or a seventh chord or—you know the famous Leonard Cohen song, *Hallelujah*? I think everybody loves that so much because he's demonstrating what going through that chord progression *feels* like. So when I'm making a painting, what I'm doing is demonstrating what the chord progression *feels* like.

JP Right. This is so fantastic. There is, of course, a long tradition of this, from experiments with color organs in the nineteenth century, where artists would play a piano and a note would correspond to a color. There's a tradition of so-called visual music. Vasily Kandinsky was interested in that.

MW Kandinsky! Yes. Exactly. Then it gets into, of course, the lights. This *Red Writing* painting, with the blue light: when I paint the paintings, sometimes I go all the way, but then sometimes I paint a picture knowing that there's something left out. I knew when I made *Red Writing* that the light would be the *other* color. It's the third color, because the ground is slightly gray, honestly. The red is a medium cadmium, and then the light is turquoise. So that's a beautiful chord. I have another painting right here that's that turquoise blue with cadmium red, which is always a super-wonderful combination. And then there are paintings that surprise me, like this painting which I love, the *Cosmos* painting.

JP It doesn't have the neon on it yet.

MW I used a lot of colors that are sort of like undergraduate mistakes. When you're an undergraduate, it seems that somehow everything ends up purple. You end up using too much alizarin crimson, which is really transparent. Everything mixes together into purple mush before you learn what paint does, actually physically, and not in theory. Color theory is taught as *theory*—

WHAT GRAY DOES IS, IT QUIETS DOWN PARTS OF THE PAINTING SO THAT THE VERY BRIGHT PARTS CAN SING.

Mary Weatherford

Opposite:
Mary Weatherford, *The Gate*, 2018, Flashe and neon on linen, 112 × 103 inches (284.5 × 261.6 cm)

Peterson, Jennifer, “Mary Weatherford,” *Gagosian*, Fall 2018, pp. 60-68

Peterson, Jennifer, “Mary Weatherford,” *Gagosian*, Fall 2018, pp. 60-68

Opposite:
Mary Weatherford, *Bird of Paradise*, 2018, Flashe and neon on linen, 117 × 104 inches (297.2 × 264.2 cm)

JP Right.

MW –and then there's the actual dirt that you're painting with. And how to get that dirt to match what you have in your head, as in blue plus red equals violet. Well, what kind of blue? What kind of red? And then what violet are you looking for? And then mixing grays, which Stephen Westfall taught me to do. I substituted for him at one of his classes at the School of Visual Arts twenty-five years ago, and the students had to mix up dove gray and bird-shit gray using opposite colors. So cobalt orange and cerulean blue make a beautiful gray, and then you add white. Another gorgeous gray is burnt umber and white. Learning how to make the grays is ground-zero colorist stuff. You can study it by looking at Chardin. It's all Western-canon stuff.

JP Right.

MW Watching the progression of color through the history of Western art is fascinating. Getting up to the candy pinks of Fragonard and Bonnard. You know what's really interesting color, because it looks like there isn't any, is Rembrandt. You know that saying, "Well she's no Rembrandt!" You can stand in a room full of paintings and go, "Now that's a good painting!" And you walk up to it, and it's a Rembrandt. A Rembrandt jumps off the wall.

JP Yeah, they're stunning.

MW They're just bananas! That creamy white that he uses for the lace.

JP You think of Rembrandt as being so dark, but then the little bits of color he uses are so powerful.

MW I wouldn't call him a tonal painter. It's all in the browns and the greens. . . . Rembrandt you just think of as glowing gold.

JP Because it's about the light he captures.

MW All that beautiful gold. I have a reproduction of a painting of his son Titus on my bathroom door, and Titus just has the most *lovely* pink cheeks.

JP Nice.

MW Goya is a wonderful colorist. Even in the *Black Paintings*. There's a picture in my show that's a political painting straight out of the Goya *Black Paintings*. Even though all the paintings in the show are political in their way.

JP Which painting?

MW See the evil floating figures? Like the Goya, with the figures floating in the air? These figures have a jubilant stupidity to them, but evil, deeply evil, in their kind of dancing and their movements. It's a scary painting.

JP So all of these works are political.

MW Well, everything always is. I thought about *Guernica* a lot this spring. In fact, here are pictures that I've printed out when I'm painting.

JP What were these used for?

MW We have Picasso's *Guernica*; we have a Gauguin of a gray horse, a Gauguin of a yellow Christ; then versions of *The Rape of the Sabine Women*–

JP Oh yes.

MW –which has different titles.

JP Part of the Art History I canon. Poussin, Rubens, David. . . .

MW That subject matter was popular, right?

JP Yes.

MW Mass rape. Mass abduction.

JP Of women.

MW So there's a lot of drama to capture.

JP Does that painting have an animal in it?

MW This one was so beautiful the way it happened, because every morning–I'm sure it was a subconscious thing–there's a rooster that crows in the canyon here. But really, this painting started because on my drive down here to the studio, I see these beautiful toyons.

JP Oh, the trees!

MW The toyon trees–

JP Those are gorgeous.

MW Right there on Museum Drive.

JP Yes! I'm fascinated by these bushes, because they have red berries. There's a theory that Hollywood is called Hollywood because of those berries. The native toyon trees look like holly.

MW That makes sense.

JP So it's a native plant.

MW There's a particular toyon tree that I see when I drive from my house to my studio. It must be the particular amount of sun and the particular amount of shade, because the bowers of red berries are *extraordinary*. The color of the toyon leaf is a deep bluish green. I thought, "Okay, I'm going to paint this toyon bower. That's what I'm going to do today." Then I got to the studio and there's this big blank canvas, and I worked very hard to mix up paint that was the color of the toyon leaves. So I put that in, and then I went to put in the red bowers, and I got this far and I thought, "My God, that

Peterson, Jennifer, “Mary Weatherford,” *Gagosian*, Fall 2018, pp. 60-68

looks like a chicken." And it struck me that it was just this *incredible* image. You and I have talked about animals in film.

JP Yes.

MW So I left it. I stopped. It answers the classic question "How do you know when you're done?" Well, I'm done when there's something so compelling that I don't want to lose it.

JP It strikes me that at this point that you know when you're done in a very confident way.

MW There's a violence to this painting that's extraordinary.

JP In this painting it's as much about what *isn't* there as what *is* there. Have you painted animals before?

MW Cats. Cats are magical creatures. I've titled paintings things like *Supernatural*, or made paintings that have to do with the supernatural, or astrophysical slippage. Cats seem complicit in that kind of thing. They have a way of disappearing. They're there but not there, like an image can be there and not there.

JP How did the neon first enter into your work?

MW I was driving around Bakersfield trying to think about the paintings for a show there. I saw old neon signs for restaurants and factories that hadn't been taken down, mainly the Padre Hotel. As I was driving around, the sun started setting and I saw the color of the sky. Who doesn't love the sight of the sky turning color and the lights of the city coming on at night? *That* moment. So I decided to paint the experience of driving around Bakersfield. After that it occurred to me, that's how I could paint about people's lives. They became paintings of cities, and paintings of places where I'd lived, namely New York and Los Angeles.

JP Have you been thinking about New York while painting the works for this show?

MW There was one painting where I wanted to use every color, and I just started, and I didn't really have any other plan. And then it was just *so exciting* because it was so *urban*. Someone even said, "This is the most like graffiti writing I've seen you do." It reminds me, in a really beautiful way, of how the subway trains looked when I got to New York.

JP In the 1980s.

MW So this one has got to be called *A Train*. The famous Duke Ellington song—

JP Yes, "Take the A Train." Speaking of titles, the upcoming exhibition is called *I've Seen Gray Whales Go By*.

MW Seeing a whale is one of the best things in life. Whales are there, and glorious, then they're gone, under the water, on their way.

Artwork © Mary Weatherford.

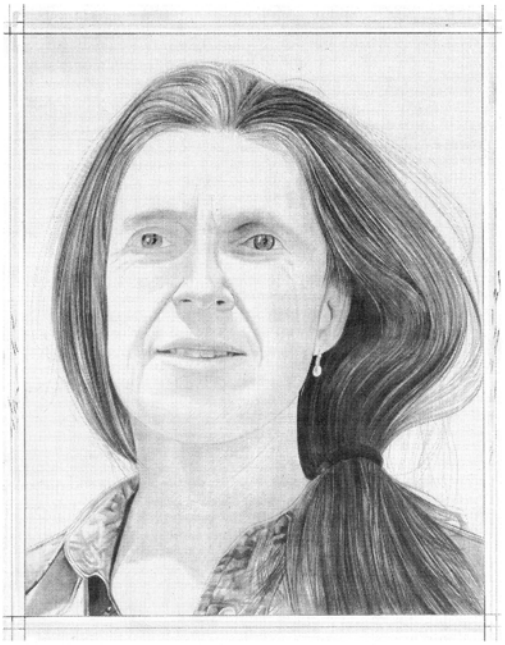
Myers, Terry R., “Mary Weatherford With Terry R. Myers,” *Brooklyn Rail*, September 2018, pp. cover, 25-29

THE BROOKLYN RAIL

THE BROOKLYN RAIL

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE **SEPTEMBER** 2018

Myers, Terry R., “Mary Weatherford With Terry R. Myers,” *Brooklyn Rail*, September 2018, pp. cover, 25-29



Portrait of Mary Weatherford, pencil on paper by Phong Bui.

Mary Weatherford with Terry R. Myers

GAGOSIAN | SEPTEMBER 13 – OCTOBER 15, 2018

On the occasion of her exhibition *I've Seen Gray Whales Go By,* critic and independent curator Terry R. Myers recently spoke with artist Mary Weatherford, who he has known since her first solo exhibition at Diane Brown Gallery in New York in 1990, in her studio in Los Angeles.

MARY WEATHERFORD: This is the last painting. It has to go out tomorrow morning.

TERRY R. MYERS (RAIL): I didn't think it was still going to be here.
WEATHERFORD: The cords aren't done. That means I have to come back tonight.

RAIL: Remind me of its title again.
WEATHERFORD: The nickname is *The New and Exciting Painting.* It doesn't have its official name yet.

RAIL: Actually, I think *The New and Exciting Painting* is a perfect place to start our conversation. [*Laughs*]
WEATHERFORD: [*Looking at the painting*] I think this is the best iteration.

RAIL: How many iterations were there?
WEATHERFORD: About five. We had gray cords, white cords, black cords. We had gray boots, white boots, black boots. We had the cords going to the right, we had cords going to the left. We had boots that we call spit-out boots, we had boots that we call turnaround boots. The problem was that the light and the cords were forming a secondary shape so the two things were not integrating. This has a wave movement now. There's a move to the right and then the cords pull back to the left, so it looks like it could swing to the left at any minute like one of those rides at an amusement park.

RAIL: The motion of this one.
WEATHERFORD: The motion. It took a long time to get the cords to say that, because they were falling straight down and it looked like the—is it the Citigroup Tower that's cut off at the top?

RAIL: The triangular top? Yeah.
WEATHERFORD: That was the problem. I think we solved it.

RAIL: How obsessive have you become with all the hardware stuff, like that list you just went through, all the different iterations, how much of that is going on with all of these?
WEATHERFORD: Every single one from the very beginning.

RAIL: Even the color of the caps.
WEATHERFORD: From the very beginning. With the Bakersfield show [in 2012] I only had access to white GTO wire. After that I found gray. I had the black manufactured for myself in Italy, believe it or not. Once I got the black cords I then had three choices. It really is the last part of the painting that is the scribble on top. But it's key. These paintings wouldn't be what they are without the third element, which is the cords.

RAIL: Well, a big question relates to these paintings being painted with this other thing that's going to happen after.
WEATHERFORD: They're being made with the idea that they will be defaced.

RAIL: But it's not only the neon, it's the cords and the transformer and the space and the situation. The person that popped in my head this morning that I don't think you're on the record about is Robert Ryman.
WEATHERFORD: Of course. Nobody has talked to me about Ryman, an obvious association. Maybe the neon trips you up to think more about [Bruce] Nauman.

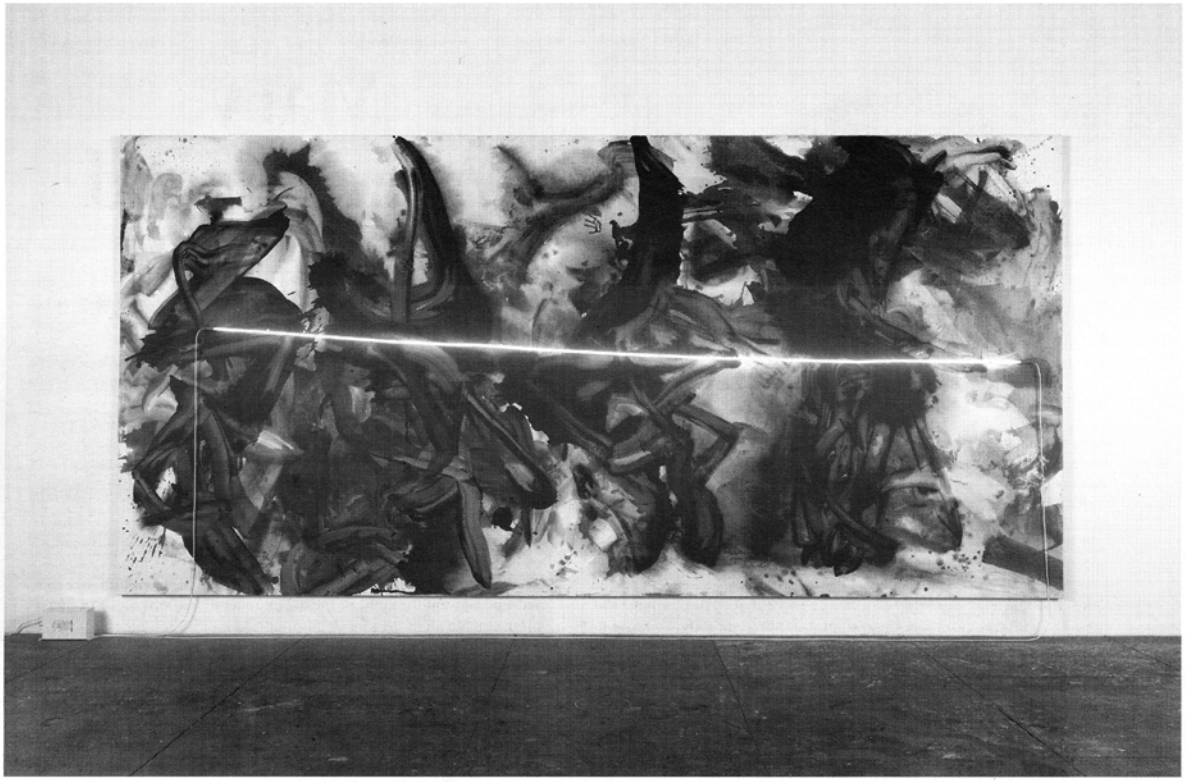
RAIL: To me, the neon is the thing that is more integrated into what I would consider painting with a capital "P." It is in the language of painting. The cords are in drawing.
WEATHERFORD: The cords are the drawing.

RAIL: And the neon is the drawing too.
WEATHERFORD: The neon is color and form, which is painting, and the cords are line. I remember the first time I saw a David Salle painting, and then of course [Francis] Picabia. I'm interested in the idea of defacing a painting, of scribbling on it. If you go through a picture book and you find a child's scribble on an illustration, that means that the kid liked that illustration. Otherwise why would they scribble on it? The child's scribble is an addition and it's an homage.

RAIL: And an improvement in their mind.
WEATHERFORD: It's an improvement. It's an homage. And it's an addition.

RAIL: Back to Ryman, the obvious parts of it are obvious—the hardware and all that stuff—but it makes me think about the terms of what is more classically or traditionally painting in Ryman in relation to what you're doing, like the painted parts of these paintings are doing things that are also going on in the neon and the cords—that you have reactivated what the gesture is in terms of its component parts: shape, color, form, line, so on and so forth.
WEATHERFORD: But there is something weird going on. If I were Ryman the painting wouldn't be stretched, it would be tacked to the wall. I'm not a purist. Now I'm looking at this and thinking that's where I've gone wrong. I should take it off the stretcher. [*Laughs*]

Myers, Terry R., “Mary Weatherford With Terry R. Myers,” *Brooklyn Rail*, September 2018, pp. cover, 25-29



Mary Weatherford, *2018*, 2018. Flashe and neon on linen, 117 x 234 inches. © Mary Weatherford. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen Studio. Courtesy Gagosian.

RAIL: Knowing your work for as long as I've known it, you have stayed committed to this category of painting in a way that's unapologetic and a given—not that you haven't done the odd thing outside of it—but this notion that even the components of the painted part of a Ryman are in dialogue with the hardware. What he's doing with paint in the context of his work makes me think of what you're doing in paint in the context of your work even though they don't really have that much in common. Many years ago, he came to the Art Institute of Chicago and he gave a twenty-minute talk. As he was putting the slides up, all he talked about was how they were lit when they were photographed in very specific terms, talking about the bulbs. At first it seemed silly but then it became an amazing experience as he was really getting into how he was seeing these works as objects and then as things that had been reproduced and then how they were being projected onto a wall with light. You think about all the ways that the presentation of a painting relies upon light. I think that there's a lot of layers going on that you've developed and I kind of want to say that has been since the very beginning of your work in the late 1980s and your 1990 solo exhibition at Diane Brown, before the neon or this kind of gesture was even in your work.

WEATHERFORD: Let's talk about the target paintings and where that comes in. I don't know if you remember this: the way I made the target paintings was that I built a giant compass using trammel points that slid up and down on a thin piece of wood. I could adjust to draw a circle bigger or smaller. One point went in the center, and then I replaced the other point with a small pencil. The compass would swing it around and it would draw. I built a drawing machine. Very interesting compared to this one because *The New and Exciting Painting* looks like the original machine for the target paintings, but lit up. The machine would carve—not really draw, but carve—a pencil line into the oil paint. I would hand paint the bands of color, and then after the paint was on there, I would use the compass to carve into the paint. So, unlike, say, Carl Ostendarp who would paint back and forth a shape so that where the colors met—they came right close together, I decided to carve that line into the wet paint. The process of making the target paintings, which were really circular timelines, was of putting paint down and then carving into it with a machine, a handheld machine, that was made out of wood and a pencil and a point. The last circular timeline I made, which was the hardest one to make, was double ovals. An oval is not made by calculus, it's not two parabolas put together, but you can build a machine to draw an oval, it's beautiful. Remember those drawing machines?

RAIL: Spirographs?

WEATHERFORD: Spirographs! I made the machine to draw ovals in my studio on Warren Street. I made side-by-side concentric ovals. The entire painting is six by eleven feet. It was never shown. And, it was just too hard to make. It was during the early days of people using computer graphics, and I had these guys print out an oval for me so I could project it, but there wasn't a program to draw a proper oval and so I did it by the old-fashioned way. That love of the parabola—which comes out of calculus—is all through these paintings. My love of math is in there. That's what the cords are: the love of math, the perfection of math, the pi. Pi doesn't discriminate, pi doesn't care who you are.

RAIL: Not at all! Changing gears, it was a provocative time when you were making those paintings.

WEATHERFORD: There was rigorous political and conceptual work going on, and then there was Moira Dryer. Moira was a big influence on me in terms of how to bring painting and sculpture together.

RAIL: I don't know if you remember, but I know you went, because you signed the book. I organized an exhibition in January of 1992 at Amy Lipton Gallery called *There is a Light That Never Goes Out*. Moira was in it, [Philip] Taaffe was in it. It had the first Polly Apfelbaum floor piece; a Michael Jenkins shower. Larry Johnson was in it.

WEATHERFORD: I signed the book? Good.

RAIL: Yes, and Moira came, not to the opening but I met her at the gallery to see the piece. She died very soon after that.

WEATHERFORD: She was so cool. Drilling holes in paintings.

RAIL: Did you know her?

WEATHERFORD: No, I knew her work. She started at John Good Gallery and then joined Mary Boone. Her show at Mary Boone was beautiful.

RAIL: That show at Mary's was within a month of my group show. The painting in my show was this beautiful pink and black striped one with grommets called *The Wall of Fear*. I love that title.

WEATHERFORD: She has influenced my work.

Myers, Terry R., "Mary Weatherford With Terry R. Myers," *Brooklyn Rail*, September 2018, pp. cover, 25-29

RAIL: I wrote a text about her that was never published, called "Dryer Eyes." It talks about how, of her generation, she's the one who left so much unfinished business.

WEATHERFORD: I was in a show recently that was a tribute to Moira Dryer at Eleven Rivington.

RAIL: I remember you were also in shows like *Painting Culture* [1991] that Deborah Kass organized for fiction/nonfiction. And you were in *Plastic Fantastic Lover (object a)* at the Blum Helman Warehouse.

WEATHERFORD: *Plastic Fantastic* was hatched in a Williamsburg loft with Gail Fitzgerald. I said, "This is who I'm interested in" and wrote a list of artists. They were all women and they were all working in sculpture and I was making painting. Max Lang had asked me to join Blum Helman Warehouse, and I said "I notice that the gallery shows nearly all men. I have an idea. I'll join the gallery, and here's your first show." I handed Max Lang—and I wish I still had that piece of paper—a napkin, or a yellow pad, with a list of about fourteen names. I said, "I want to be in this, but I don't want to curate it." So he took it and he got Catherine Liu to work on it and she added a lot of interesting people that I didn't know. She added Cathy de Monchaux. A lot of Europeans I didn't know. That show was a real who's who, a crystal ball. The opening was incredible.

RAIL: It's all coming back to me now.

WEATHERFORD: Ava Gerber, Jessica Stockholder, Polly Apfelbaum—people should know about this show—Angela Bulloch, Rona Pondick, Andrea Zittel, Karen Kilimnik, Gail Fitzgerald, Rosemarie Trockel . . .

RAIL: It's interesting what was going on with the idea of painting in that context. I talk about Mary Heilmann as someone who is performing the moves of everything but painting in painting, and you come to painting from a sculptural point of view too. I always go back to your references: your use of opera, for example, in that early work, a lot of people talked about it as an opening up of painting, not that there were never paintings done related to opera.

WEATHERFORD: I want to go there but I also want to stop and acknowledge—thinking about the show you curated—whether it was your intention or not, what I saw was your interest in color.

RAIL: Well, it was called *There is a Light That Never Goes Out*, which is a song by The Smiths, and in 1992 I would hope it was cool to name a show after The Smiths.

WEATHERFORD: What's impossible—impossible!—to understand, for people who are even ten years younger than we are, is what the AIDS crisis looked like in New York at the time, and why color might be important. That color can hit an emotional tone. For anybody who had eyes in their head, in downtown New York City, we lived and moved among the dying.

I worked in a postcard shop at the time. I was graduating from Princeton, and one of my professors, Andrea Blum, asked, "Do you want to be an artist?" And I said "Yes" so she said, "I'll get you a job, I'm friends with some people who are opening a postcard shop." And I said "Fine. That sounds good." It was called Untitled II. It was on Broadway at Great Jones. It's now a sneaker store. There was another one in SoHo simply called Untitled. The original was in Paris. Untitled II, where I worked, was also an important photography bookstore. Michele Davies did the postcards, and her husband, Bevan Davies, the well known photographer who showed at Sonnabend, had the photography book business. It was a double-whammy.

I arrived at Untitled II before it opened for business. We had empty postcard bins and empty bookshelves. It would be impossible to read all the books in a bookstore, unless they arrived box by box. A box would arrive, I would open it, read the books, shelve them. The store filled up little by little. I learned the history of photography, mostly black and white photography, from the very beginning, Gustave Le Gray all the way up to present-day. And then there were the postcards. Every artist in downtown Manhattan came into that photography bookstore and bought postcards from the bins. There were thousands of postcards that were arranged in two ways—which was very weird—by subject matter and by artist. This was the brain-child of a very curious and brilliant woman and every artist—*every artist*—would come in for hours. Jean-Michel Basquiat came in. I could tell what artists were working on based on the stack of cards they handed me at the register. One of the most popular cards at the time was [Arnold] Böcklin's *Island of the Dead* [1880]. I don't know if it would still be the most popular card, but I don't think so. The other thing that was popular—I looked down on customers who chose this because it was so popular and so fun—was the boxed set of Matisse cut-outs. Jean-Michel came in one day—I knew who he was—and I thought, "I wonder what he's going to bring to cash register." Here he comes with this box of Matisse cut-outs. I rang it up and it's five dollars and something, and he turns his pockets inside out like "No money." So I said "Well, I guess you'll have to come back." Alexis Rockman would come in, Francesco Clemente, Robert Mapplethorpe, Louise Lawler. Everyone.

RAIL: I remember it was *the* place. People now probably can't wrap their head around it. This was the Google Images of the time.

WEATHERFORD: If you wanted to go get some images, you either had to rip up some art magazines or go to an Untitled bookstore and buy a bunch of postcards.

RAIL: I was working at the MoMA library that has 500,000 or so artist files and you could sit in the reading room and look at things there if you wanted to, but that was something you'd have to intentionalize. What I remember about Untitled II is just going in with nothing planned. How long did you work there?

WEATHERFORD: I worked there for at least a year—maybe longer, maybe two years. People would come to the cash register with their stack of postcards and I would ring them up and they'd say, "That's too much money, I only want these two." Then I would restock the rejects.

RAIL: I suppose on an unconscious level every single one of those postcards you looked at imprinted itself on your brain. Wow.

WEATHERFORD: Do you want to look at the checklist for the show? See if it spurs anything? What's new and exciting, Terry?

RAIL: Yeah, what's new and exciting? [*Laughs.*] Maybe it's not necessarily new and exciting, but how long did you work on these new paintings?

WEATHERFORD: A year.

RAIL: A massive group of paintings that are going back to New York, which has to be meaningful.

WEATHERFORD: I feel good about it, but anytime you make a brush stroke—and you're the person to talk to about this Terry—you're talking to De Kooning if you're in New York.

RAIL: This is where I want to go. You did the *Red Hook* show at Brennan & Griffin [2015], and you were in the *Forever Now* show at MoMA [*Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World*, 2014 – 15] so the relatively recent work has been integrated into a conversation that I still want to claim as a kind of conversation about New York painting—I don't mean only New York School painting.

WEATHERFORD: Okay.

RAIL: You've upped the scale which makes me think of the situation of what these paintings can mean in New York but now maybe—and I'm being deliberately stupid—you are being the California painter you always were, and the conversation about painting here and the conversation about painting there.

WEATHERFORD: I think the work that influenced me was, on the one hand, art that I saw at what was the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art. In high school I saw—and I know he's from New Jersey—a Robert Smithson show there. The La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, now the San Diego MCA, has the greatest view of any museum in the world bar-none. The only artist that's been able to deal with that is Robert Irwin. There's a room that faces onto that beautiful stretch of the Pacific Ocean and anything that was put in that room would be killed by the view. So Irwin cut a hole in the window. It's one of the greatest art pieces made in the last . . .

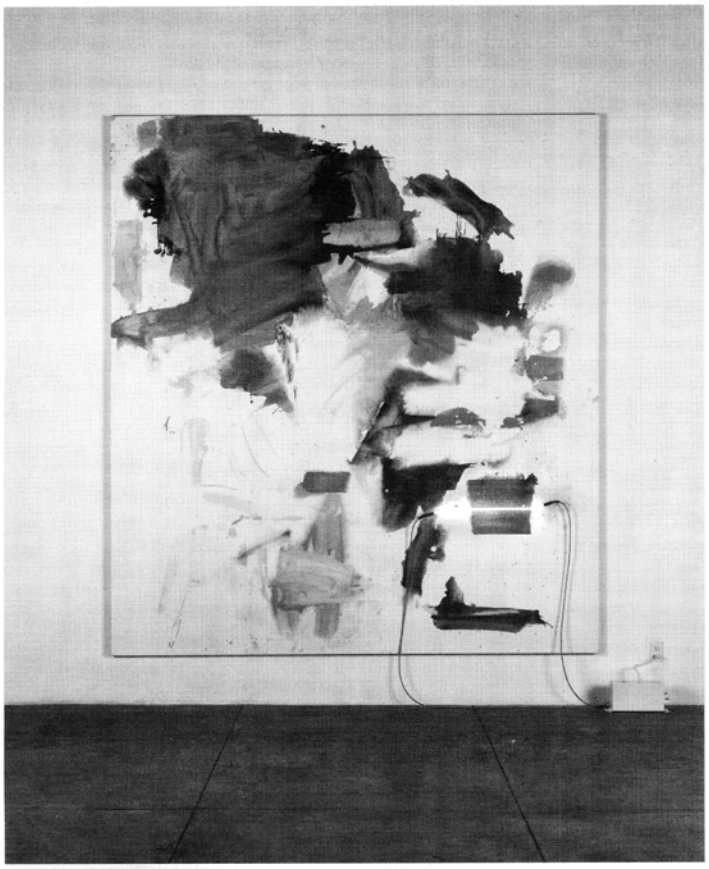
What also struck me intensely was a Richard Artschwager show. This would have been in the '70s. The permanent collection was a lot of light and space and post-minimal art. So I had that background of growing up in Los Angeles and San Diego and then going to Princeton and having Sam Hunter as my Art History professor. Sam, of course, organized the first museum show of Jackson Pollock [1956 at MoMA]. I came from Light and Space to New York and heard about the New York School by the way of Sam. The artists who were teaching at Princeton were abstract painters and sculptors. So, my paintings are . . . you just sort of slap those two things together …

RAIL: And then you're done!

WEATHERFORD: … and make them talk to each other.

RAIL: So let's put De Kooning on the table. Let's say, 1957, '58, '59, you know paintings like *Ruth's Zowie* [1957], *Merritt Parkway* [1959],*Suburb in Havana* [1958]—when he is a passenger in the car back and forth to the Hamptons as he's starting to disengage from the city and, as I said in my review of the MoMA show, he's leaving the haters behind, he's about to go full-on back "into" the water, the ocean, maybe back to his Rotterdam roots. What he's looking at and experiencing. You also go back in the studio having had experiences and then you make the painting with your gestures. It's the same thing, but that doesn't mean its derivative, and it's not the same thing. This is why I am been happy to be writing again about Cecily Brown's work right now. I think there's plenty of room now to do the things you and her and some others are doing.

Myers, Terry R., "Mary Weatherford With Terry R. Myers," *Brooklyn Rail*, September 2018, pp. cover, 25-29



Mary Weatherford, *Arroyo walk*, 2017. Flashe and neon on linen, 117 x 104 x 4 1/4 inches. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen Studio. Courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA.

WEATHERFORD: I believe that. One of the reasons I paint so thinly is so that—what you would call it?—the iconography? is vastly different from De Kooning. I stopped using oil paint in 1991. I wanted to leave that history behind.

RAIL: Right. I also think that the methodology of these paintings that they are being made with a mindfulness of these other components—that has to change the production.

WEATHERFORD: Terry, that's straight out of Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*.

RAIL: Right.

WEATHERFORD: In that book he writes about the punctum. I became fascinated by it. Like the pearl necklace in a photograph... what's the *thing*? That goes back to my stain paintings with the flowers silkscreened on them—this idea came from looking at Helen Frankenthaler's stone lithographs at Princeton. I went through a stack of them that looked like *nothing* to me. There's no place to focus. They're empty. That's the beauty of them. There's something in my personality that wanted them to have a stamp. Like a [*thud*] and so, sometimes my paintings are just me finishing a Frankenthaler. [*Laughs.*]

RAIL: Well, you have the advantage or disadvantage of all the history of painting that's been important since that time—and I do mean all of it. And maybe it's not just painting. You brought up the Metro Pictures group. Your paintings wouldn't exist as they do now if not for the Sherrie Levines and . . .

WEATHERFORD: Oh, absolutely not. Even Cindy Sherman. I don't think she's given many interviews, but her project about—maybe I don't know what I'm talking about—the feminine self? I don't want to call it a "search for," but a presentation of—what would you call it?

RAIL: A perpetual presentation?

WEATHERFORD: . . . a perpetual presentation of the changing self, the feminine self. There was a moment in about 1992 when I decided to become the author. I thought that the most frightening thing to claim, as a woman painter, would be authorship.

RAIL: Right.

WEATHERFORD: Even the title of this show. *I've Seen Gray Whales Go By* …

RAIL: I had a thought about the title of the show. Is it … is the humor I'm reading in it in it?

WEATHERFORD: Hmm, I don't know.

RAIL: Because I'm reading it as referencing painting itself. You, and I, have watched gray whales go by.

WEATHERFORD: …if you've ever gone out whale watching.

RAIL: I know that's the real thing. To me it connects to a point you made so beautifully before about coming of age when you and I did in New York. Just having that be present. Again, back to my title from The Smiths, a key line from that song is "take me out tonight / because I want to see people / and I want to see lights." And I wrote in the press release that it was an exhibition about color. People and lights were the two things that Morrissey wanted to to see, both, I would suggest, in relation to color and death.

WEATHERFORD: I don't know how to talk about this, but there was an equating of sex with death then. Any sexual encounter was a risk.

RAIL: There's something to me about what you're describing, about what you're letting us in on what the paintings do in the gesture, the material, again all of the stuff I'm going to call the hardware. All of these decisions—I guess we could call them formal decisions or material decisions—are permeated by this worldview.

WEATHERFORD: I think about Emily Dickinson a lot. Who wrote *Sexual Personae*?

RAIL: Camille Paglia.

WEATHERFORD: Right. There's a chapter on Emily Dickinson in there. I thought it was great. I'm a big Dickinson reader and I think that the paintings, in some ways, have a something to do with her themes: death, mortality, longing.
So what else do you want to talk about?

RAIL: Well we could start with me having witnessed what I just witnessed, which is the devil in the details, the fixing things in the work? [*Laughs*]

WEATHERFORD: The trauma is screwing a hole in the painting.

RAIL: Exactly.

WEATHERFORD: I mean what happens . . .

RAIL: . . .you are planning on doing it all along.

WEATHERFORD: What happens if you make a mistake? Because you can't make mistakes. What happens if you put a light on it and you live with it and you think, "that doesn't really work."

RAIL: Right.

WEATHERFORD: That means the light is a part of the *painting* because if one were to approach it as a Sol LeWitt with a directive like 'one painting with one light two thirds of the way down' then it would be . . .

RAIL: . . . whatever happens happens.

WEATHERFORD: Right.

RAIL: The idea is the machine that makes the art—but painting with light ...

WEATHERFORD: There's something odd about putting on a light and have it be not quite right. What is good composition? Why is a painting good? The composition of a painting has everything to do with how close—shall I call it the object? Image? The stuff inside of the painting (that's what De Kooning 's working on)—how close to the edge? Where is the painting and where does the painting stop? Where am I and where do I stop?

When I'm working with the light in the studio, I hang the lights with fishing lines and move them around like puppets to find the right spot. One of the things I started saying when it didn't look right is, "That looks stupid" because you can't really argue with that. It's like saying "that doesn't work" or "that's wrong." It's ludicrous. Why does it look wrong? How does it look wrong? Is it too uncomfortable? Does it not rub you the wrong way? Does it not rub you the right way?

RAIL: Because it could be that it's wrong because it's too right.

WEATHERFORD: We're not looking for symmetry, like in a face. But there's some moment that is—for lack of a better word—compelling.

RAIL: Right. I mean I think it is sort of good old-fashioned things like composition. Like, playing with rules and tweaking them.

WEATHERFORD: But what are the rules of composition? Are they made up by physics? I look at fractal patterns and they resemble nothing—crystal formations, snowflakes …

RAIL: Isn't it also as much about cultural conditioning?

WEATHERFORD: Two eyes, one nose, one mouth, two ears.

RAIL: Right, but isn't it also like cultural conditioning?

WEATHERFORD: Yeah.

RAIL: Like the condition of the screen today. But I'm curious what your reaction would be to the notion that the neon light, the cords, and all the accoutrements are asserting that the painting is perpetually being made. It's a way of activating the painting without it moving, without it being kinetic. Of course all light is hitting our eyes so you could say all painting is actively being made in front of us. If the light is not hitting someone's eyes, is it being seen? Here's another stroke of paint, but there it's light—it's not the same as the paint on the painting and it is plugged in, drawing electricity. The idea of the painting always doing something, or working. I think that the neon does that in the most straight-forward way but also then it becomes—it could be metaphysical, it could be quasi-spiritual, it could be moody, it might be funny, it could be . . . you know. And then, yeah, you have to plug the damn thing in. Those boxes are even called transformers!

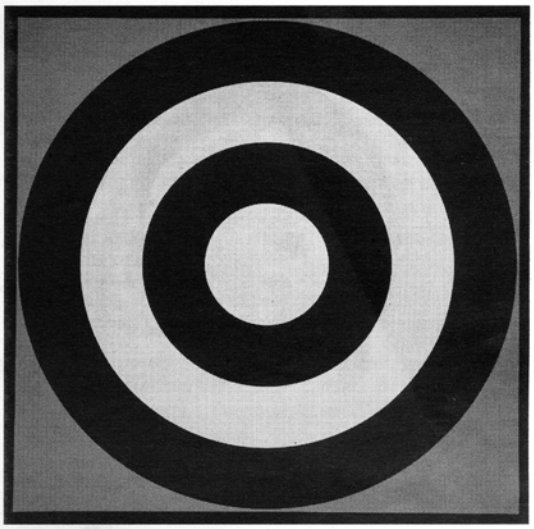
So, *The New and Exciting Painting* will get a new title?

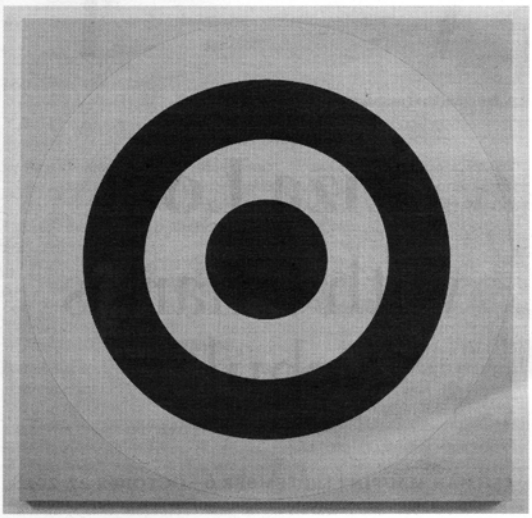
WEATHERFORD: It might keep the title because of all paintings in the show, the way that light splits at the edge I think is funny. There is a place for humor, and there's not another painting that does that. This is the first one.

RAIL: Having not seen all the shows you've been doing since the neon but seeing this body of work in the studio, it strikes me that it opens up even more the territory for what comes next. Not that I could put too fine of a point on that, but it also relates to something that I know other people have talked about in relation to your work—the progression in how you've worked relative to what I would call the experiential source material. I think you said somewhere else that that shifted over time.

WEATHERFORD: There was a painting in my show at David Kordansky's called *Arroyo Walk* [2017]. One evening I went for a walk in the Arroyo. The sun went down. I walked under a bridge. There were oak trees and some construction going on and under the bridge there was an orange cone. It was a beautiful walk. I came home. The next day I made a painting with a heavy silver-gray at the top, like the bridge, deep oak-colored green, and an orange stroke. A direct translation. Alternatively, there might be a painting like the one in this show called *2018*, made when I was very agitated. It was the week of the alleged gas attacks by [Bashar al] Assad. I'd recently visited the Prado for the first time—the Goya *Black Paintings* [ca.1820 – 23] were on my mind, especially the one with the floating figures. I was working on this painting and suddenly I needed to put in these evil floating figures. So this painting is more of a history painting. There might be a painting in this show called *Sweet Potato*. I'm learning to ride a horse, and this big, lazy horse's name is Sweet Potato. The massiveness of this horse is striking with its beautiful color. So I came to the studio and made a painting about him. I used to attend Neil de Grasse Tyson's lecture series he put together at the American Museum of Natural History when I lived in New York City. I like going to astrophysics lectures. I've downloaded many photos from the Smithsonian and NASA of phenomena like the Horsehead Nebula. This painting is a Horsehead Nebula, Terry. There are a lot of horses in this show.

TERRY R. MYERS is a critic and independent curator based in Los Angeles.





Top: Mary Weatherford, *Odette/Odile*, 1990. Oil on canvas, 82 x 82 inches. Courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA.

Bottom: Mary Weatherford, *Nagasaki*, 1989. Oil on canvas, 82 x 82 1/4 x 1 3/4 inches. Courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA.

Smith, Roberta, "The Paint Remains The Point," *The New York Times*, September 28, 2018, p. C15

The New York Times

ROBERTA SMITH | ART REVIEW

The Paint Remains The Point

These seven shows put Color Field front and center.

AGATON STROM FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Visibly liquid paint has gone in and out of style, but it never went away.

AGATON STROM FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Above, Mary Weatherford's "Gloria" at the Gagosian Gallery in Chelsea.

Left, Ed Clark's "Elevation" at the Mnuchin Gallery.

FEW TRUTHS about paint are more basic than this: It tends to go on wet, whether on canvas, furniture or buildings, and then it dries. Once dried, it can preserve a sense of its original fluidity to greatly varying degrees. In the postwar years, it became a sure sign of modernity and freshness. It's dynamic, at times volcanic, like artistic genius is supposed to be, but it can also have a comedic, even ironic quality. It conveys immediacy, material reality, improvisation as well as flamboyance and glamour, savoir faire.

Giving full voice to the liquidity of paint has gone in and out of style since it was liberated in the 1940s by the drip paintings of Jackson Pollock, Janet Sobel and Norman Lewis. In the mid-1950s, Helen Frankenthaler opened further possibilities. Working on the floor, she thinned her paint to the consistency of water, creating floods and eddies of color that soaked into the canvas. Her techniques established the Color Field School in the United States. The Japanese artists of the Gutai took wetness to fabulous excesses, making it a lavalike substance. Things turned ironic with Andy Warhol's Oxidation series, achieved by the artist and others urinating on canvases painted with copper metallic paint.

Sometime in the 1970s, Color Field fell out of favor and visibly liquid paint had a much a lower profile. You could say it flowed underground. But it never went away, and right now, seven shows in New York galleries give both its present and its recent past a new visibility.

Ed Clark

Through Oct. 20. Mnuchin Gallery, 45 East 78th Street, Manhattan; 212-861-0020, mnuchingallery.com.

The career of Ed Clark, now 92, is the subject of this vigorous 40-year career survey, which establishes his singular exploration of the formal and narrative potential of color and paint. Mr. Clark sometimes stains but mostly he wields wide brushes and even brooms, magnifying impasto and brushwork in piled-up strokes that seem to squirm on the surface. More characteristic are broad bands and curves of color that zoom across or out of corners, achieving an almost sculptural force, as in the pale, propulsive streams of "Elevation" (1992), a tumult of sound, water and paint all in one.

In "Blacklash," from 1964, Mr. Clark signals racial anger with his title and a splatter of black paint that fans against red and white, like a cat-o'-nine-tails. In the formally vehement "Orange Front" (1962), a stained orange field is barricaded with broad strokes of blue and blue green; they mostly cover a big black shape, visible from drips that extend from it to the canvas's upper edge.

Vivian Springford

Through Oct. 20. Almine Rech Gallery, 39 East 78th Street, second floor, Manhattan; 212-804 8496, alminerech.com.

Virtually next door to Mnuchin, the Almine Rech Gallery is showing the little-known Color Field painter Vivian Springford (1913-2003), whose work first resurfaced in an exhibition at the Gary Snyder Gallery in 1988, two years after macular degeneration had forced her to stop painting. Most of the paintings here feature concentric poolings of translucent colors that intimate flowers, clouds and water reflections. They build on the potential of Georgia O'Keeffe's early watercolors — as O'Keeffe did not — but also evoke the art critic Robert Hughes's epithet about the Color Field paintings being "giant watercolors." The smaller, more intensely colored works are livelier, especially an untitled painting from 1972 that evokes Arthur Dove's visionary conjurings of nature.

Larry Poons

Through Oct. 27. Yares Art, East 57th Street, Manhattan; 212-256-0969, yaresart.com.

Larry Poons has always been something of

Smith, Roberta, "The Paint Remains The Point," *The New York Times*, September 28, 2018, p. C15

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Frank Bowling's "Elder Sun Benjamin," on display in an exhibition at Alexander Gray Associates.

CHEIM & READ, NEW YORK

Joan Mitchell's "Untitled (Blue Michigan)" at Cheim & Read.

a maverick who trusts his instincts and never minds fashion. He first became known in the early 1960s for stripped down "dot" paintings whose combination of evenly stained color, punctuated with small precise lozenges, aligned him with Color Field, Minimalism and Op Art in one fell swoop. By the late 1960s, he had gone heavy-duty, creating thick, creviced topographies of paint poured on horizontal unstretched canvases soon designated the "Elephant Skin" series.

By 1971, the canvas was back on the wall, and Mr. Poons was throwing paint from cans and buckets, always aiming high. It ran down the surface in thick rivulets as funkily literal as they are associational. Words like vines, rain, waterfalls and fountains run through the mind in this rare and wonderful show, titled "Ruffles Queequeg + The Throw Decade 1971-1981." (The reference to Queequeg of "Moby Dick" fame is a transitional wavelike work.) I can imagine these pieces holding their own against Monet's "Waterlilies." In an essay in the catalog, Frank Stella, the painter and Mr. Poons's friend, calls him "Mr. Natural," which seems accurate.

Frank Bowling

Through Oct. 13. Alexander Gray Associates, 510 West 26th Street, Manhattan; 212-399-2636, alexandergray.com.

The Guyana-born, London-educated painter Frank Bowling, now 86, imperiously takes Ezra Pound's famous battle cry to artists as the title of his show of recent work: "Make It New." What Mr. Bowling has been making new for much of his career is Color Field painting, messing it up with added images and references. When he was living in New York in the 1970s, the continents of Africa or South America sometimes floated behind his fluorescent fields of color. (Hints of them recur in "Another Morrison as in Stuart.")

Elsewhere, Mr. Bowling undermines the style's pristine aloofness and one-shot purity by adding bits of fabric, thread and whatnot. These make reference to craft and ritual, and to time, reconsideration and even decay. But Mr. Bowling refuses predictability: "Drift I" and "Drift II" (2018) are formally ironic, door-size canvases printed with bright stripes, each topped with an eruption of paint as thick as melted ice cream.

Joan Mitchell

Through Nov. 3. Cheim & Read, 547 West 25th Street, Manhattan; 212-242-7727, cheimread.com.

I've never been enamored of Joan Mitchell's early paintings, but some of the best are in Cheim & Read's latest exploration of her achievement, expansively titled "Paintings From the Middle of the Last Century, 1953-1962." Their slashing brush work challenge Pollock. Like Ed Clark, she relished speed, but worked more intuitively, yet often arrived at an uneasy brittleness in the swirls of strokes.

The show tracks the slowing down that was Mitchell's development. There's still some slashing, but with wider brushes more loaded with color, which decreases the blender effect. With the blues, green and oranges of "Blue Michigan" from 1961, we see Mitchell reach maturity, beginning a 30-year phase that lasted until her death — and during which she only got better.

Elizabeth Neel

Through Oct. 27. Mary Boone, 541 West 24th Street, Manhattan; 212-752-2929, maryboonegallery.com.

Like Mary Weatherford, Elizabeth Neel adds unexpected elements to her painterly abstractions: hard-edge geometric shapes in black or white as well as textured rubbing-like silhouettes of insects. These accent the methodical way the paintings are built up, for example with mirroring Rorschach-like motifs. The paintings have a new clarity that makes them Ms. Neel's most impressive efforts so far. The show's title — "Tangled on a Serpent Chair" — suggests an artist on the hot seat, which may be a good place to work from.

Mary Weatherford

Through Oct. 15. Gagosian, 555 West 24th Street, Manhattan; 212-741-1111, gagosian.com.

With "I've Seen Gray Whales Go By," Mary Weatherford joins the small group of female painters who have taken over, with aplomb, the big top that is the Gagosian franchise's West 24th Street space. She is aided by four new paintings nearly 10 feet across, like the exuberantly messy pink-on-pink "Gloria." More power to her. Ms. Weatherford has painted for over two decades, dabbling in appropriation, adding objects to her abstract canvases, and moving back to Los Angeles. There she hit on her signature device: finishing her lyrical stain paintings with one or two lengths of neon that extend up or across their surfaces, their draped cords and adapters on display. The paintings are lighted from within and alive.

They are also ecstatic, pierced by beams of light, similar to Bernini's "Ecstasy of St. Theresa." The combination bridges the gap between painters like Helen Frankenthaler and Post-Minimalists like Bruce Nauman and Keith Sonnier. A strange unity is achieved. You can't imagine the canvases without their neon, and Ms. Weatherford holds back her aggressive brush strokes to foster this reciprocity. It's great to see her in a space where macho painting tends to prevail, but attaching lengths of neon to paintings has its limitations.

Zara, Janelle, “Seeking Beauty: Five Artists Whose Eye-Opening Work You Won’t Want to Miss,” *Galerie*, Summer 2018, pp. 68, 70-72

Galerie

Seeking Beauty

FIVE ARTISTS WHOSE EYE-OPENING WORK YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS

Mary Weatherford's *City*, 2017, layers neon over fields of paint.

FREDRIK NILSEN, COURTESY OF DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY, LOS ANGELES

MARY WEATHERFORD

In the land-inspired legacy of Southern California artists, the work of Ojai-born Los Angeles painter Mary Weatherford is a poetic ode to West Coast ecologies, including endless coastlines, rugged hillsides, and neon-illuminated streets. But rather than depict landscapes, her paintings abstract the factual details of a given moment—location, temperature, time of day—and distill them into their atmospheric qualities, producing swarms of overlapping colors of various opacity that retain the visibility of the artist's brushstrokes.

In the mid-1990s and through the aughts, Weatherford was embedding her canvases with natural flourishes, including actual seashells, sponges, and starfish. In her 2012 "Bakersfield" series, she began incorporating tubes of neon into her works, a decision that proved transformative. As evidenced in her first show with L.A. gallerist David Kordansky in 2014, these stripes of light stretched across diluted expanses of vinyl-based Flashe paint turned her linen canvases into electrified night skies. Striking another note, her 2014 *Canyon* featured the hazy, rosy undertones of sunset, with red and white neon evoking the endless streams of headlights and taillights that dominate aerial views of Southern California.

Now decades into her career, Weatherford is expanding her practice. At her last Kordansky show, in 2017, her canvases had grown as large as 10 by 20 feet; her next solo exhibition will be at art powerhouse Gagosian. With her first career survey planned at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston in August 2019, Weatherford seems well on the way to long-overdue acclaim. *gagosian.com*

—JANELLE ZARA

"Where to buy," *The Week*, Arts, April 7, 2017

THE WEEK

Where to buy

A select exhibition in a private gallery

Mary Weatherford paints sunsets in a whole new way. For five years, the Los Angeles–based artist has been filling mammoth canvases with bold color fields, then affixing to each painting a strip or two of illuminated neon—all in the service of capturing a particular feeling. The series came to mind one evening when Weatherford was driving in Bakersfield and the sky was turning otherworldly colors just as businesses' neon signs were clicking on and beginning to buzz. The paintings evoke a twilight feeling, the feeling of time running out. Without the neon touch, Weatherford's swaths of subtly shifting color might evoke merely the soothing power of a beautiful sky at dusk. The humming neon layers in a frisson of danger. *At David Kordansky Gallery, 5130 W. Edgewood Pl., Los Angeles. (323) 935-3030. Prices upon request.*

Animals *(2017)*

Miranda, Carolina A., “Artist’s noble pursuit,” *Los Angeles Times*, Arts & Books, April 2, 2017, pp. F6-F7

Los Angeles Times

KIRK MCKOY Los Angeles Times

MARY WEATHERFORD with “Blue Cut Fire,” 2017, a fusion of abstract painting with bright neon, at the David Kordansky Gallery.

Artist’s noble pursuit

With bold brush strokes and luminous neon, L.A. painter Mary Weatherford comes into her own.

BY CAROLINA A. MIRANDA

The turning point was a Bakersfield sky.

Roughly five years ago, artist Mary Weatherford was driving around the city at dusk, a time when the heavens frequently take on otherworldly tints of sapphire, pink and orange, and the neon signs click on, one by one, their insect hums buzzing above evening traffic.

The sight inspired Weatherford, a Los Angeles painter who was then on an artistic residency at Cal State Bakersfield, to create a series of abstracted landscapes that employed ordinary paint-on-canvas in combination with luminous bits of neon light. In works such as 2012’s “Ruby II (Thrifty Mart),” overlapping pools of diaphanous blue and orange paint are divided by the brilliant line of red neon tube that hovers over the surface of the canvas.

The works, says Weatherford, are “about what’s going in the peripheral vision. It’s motion.”

The pieces aren’t so much literal portraits of place as they are broad evocations — a physical embodiment of the sensation one gets tooling along a broad avenue in the San Joaquin Valley as the sun dissolves into the horizon.

“I hold an experience in my head,” she adds. “What’s the experience? What’s the experience? And I paint that experience.”

Weatherford is tall and graceful, with a mane of red-brown hair that cascades below her shoulders. The Ojai-born artist is most delighted when she is talking about painting, that of others and her own: The works by Diego Velazquez she saw on a recent trip to Madrid. The Belgian linen she uses as canvas. The alchemical fusions of color, light and material that compose a piece.

“Purple is so hard,” she says, as she places herself on a chair at the David Kordansky Gallery in Los Angeles, where she is currently showing more than a dozen new works. “[Mark] Rothko is the mastermind of purple.”

The exhibition shows Weatherford pushing her technique in new directions: Letting her colorful forms dance in looser arrangements and working at a larger scale. A suite of four paintings in the north gallery extends to a length of almost 20 feet, some bearing pieces of neon so impossibly elongated, they take on a thread-like fragility.

“When you pick it up, it’s like a piece of spaghetti,” she says, gesturing toward a length of blue neon. “Glass bends. I can’t even watch.”

These pieces represent an important moment in her career.

‘Nothing girly’

For all of her adult life, she has steadily made art, even as she took on various day jobs to support herself: working in a bookstore, an art gallery and for other artists. “Art has been my through line,” she says. “I’ve never stopped painting no matter what was happening.”

When she was starting out in the late 1980s, she tackled appropriation. In subsequent years, Weatherford turned her attention to landscape, both urban and wild, creating paintings that featured sky, caves and tangled vegetation. Throughout her career, her work has drawn critical notice. (In 1990, New York Times critic Roberta Smith reviewed an early show, describing her sense of color as “unusual and promising.”)

But since 2012, when Weatherford began incorporating neon into her increasingly expressive canvases, her work has drawn a heightened level of interest from the art world.

The Bakersfield paintings were shown in art spaces in Los Angeles and New York. By 2013, she had signed on with Kordansky. The following year, the Museum of Modern Art in New York included a number of her works in the exhibition “The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World.” The painting “the light in Lancaster,” after the Mojave Desert town known for its blooms of wild poppies, was featured in the exhibition catalog.

“It’s easy to make an abstract painting,” says Laura Hoptman, the MoMA curator who organized the show. “It’s very hard to make a very good abstract painting.”

But when she saw Weatherford’s neon-studded works at a small downtown Manhattan gallery in 2012, she says she was floored.

“They made an enormous impression,” she says. “There is this strength and ambition. There is nothing girly and pretty about it. There is a muscular and deliberate quality to the way that she is moving paint around.”

In 2019, the artist will be the subject of her first retrospective at Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. Kordansky, who acquired one of the painter’s works in 2012, before he represented her professionally, says Weatherford has traveled an intriguing arc.

“She didn’t have a fixed way of working,” he explains via email. “When you look back over the last 30 years, she’s consistently defied expectations and pushed boundaries, which isn’t easy to do in a discipline as practiced as painting.”

A ‘frightening’ Van Gogh

A ‘frightening’ Van Gogh

Weatherford, in the meantime, is more intrigued by discussions relating to painting than her career: The brush she purchased in Rome, the vinyl-based paint that leaves whorls of color on her canvases, the large-scale paintings she studied before she began to make large works of her own. (In addition to visiting works by Velazquez on her recent trip to Spain, she spent ample time dissecting Picasso’s “Guernica” and El Greco’s “The Burial of the Count of Orgaz.”)

“I’m interested in the experiential quality of a large painting,” she says. “Gigantic paintings that one can relate to with one’s body rather than with one’s eyes or mind.”

Weatherford was born in Ojai, but when she was 3, her family relocated to Los Angeles’ Baldwin Hills. Roughly seven years later, they moved to San Diego. Her father was an Episcopal priest; her mother, who studied history at Stanford, ran the household — no small job in a family with five children.

Art and artists, she says, were always part of the mix, even in her early childhood years in eccentric Ojai of the 1960s.

The first painting she remembers seeing was a piece by Franklin Fireshaker, an Ojai artist of Ponca heritage known for chronicling aspects of indigenous ritual.

“They were these great, swirling peyote-inspired works,” she recalls. “They were so magical to me.”

From childhood visits back to Ojai, Weatherford has memories of a family that lived in a stone castle and another that inhabited a home designed by Lloyd Wright. “I think that’s where I got my love of Modernism,” she says.

During her family’s Los Angeles years, there were regular visits to the rose garden at Exposition Park and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. During a Van Gogh exhibition, she remembers her father holding her up in front of the painter’s “Wheatfield with Crows,” from 1890, so she could examine it closely.

“He told me, ‘This is the most frightening painting I’ve seen in my life,’” says Weatherford. “As a child, you say, ‘I’m going to consider this and consider what’s frightening about it.’ I really looked. It’s a very frightening painting.”

She attended Princeton University as a way of getting out of California. “I loved seasons and

Miranda, Carolina A., "Artist's noble pursuit," *Los Angeles Times*, Arts & Books, April 2, 2017, pp. F6-F7

FREDRIK NILSEN

"ANIMALS" from 2017 is flashe and neon on linen. More than a dozen of her works are on display at the David Kordansky Gallery. The exhibition shows Weatherford pushing her technique in new directions.

'Mary Weatherford: like the land loves the sea'

Where: David Kordanksy Gallery, 5130 W. Edgewood Place, Mid-Wilshire, Los Angeles
When: Through May 6
Info: *davidkordanskygallery.com*

seeing snow and the East Coast and history," she says. "When I flew to New York City, I was like, 'Wow, this is cool!' I wanted to be near Broadway and the theater."

At Princeton, she was introduced to the work of conceptual artists who would make her rethink the nature of art — in particular, the photographer Sherrie Levine, an appropriation artist known for re-photographing famous works of art by figures such as Walker Evans. Weatherford says she was intrigued by the idea of authorship and how it could be claimed as an artistic gesture — and the ways in which a woman, claiming a man's work, could resonate in poignant ways.

"I thought the '[After] Walker Evans' series was end-game work," she says. "Really strong, feminist work."

After she graduated in 1984 with a degree in visual arts and art history, Weatherford settled in New York City, where she completed the Whitney Independent Study Program, and much later, a master of fine arts at Bard College. In a small apartment on the Upper West Side, she made art — in the early days, color experiments inspired by the works of Modernist Josef Albers — and worked a succession of day jobs.

Among the most intriguing: a gig at the Paula Cooper Gallery, where she helped organize the image archives.

"I saw every Elizabeth Murray ever made," she says. "Every Carl Andre ever made. Every Donald Judd ever made … I met Elizabeth Murray, who was very supportive of my work. The roster was legendary. It was the height of awesome Paula Cooper-ness."

She returned to Los Angeles in 1999, where she continued to work and paint and show her work in galleries in Los Angeles, as well as in places such as Chicago and New York. In 2008, she was featured in the California Biennial at the Orange County Museum of Art.

Then came Bakersfield — and the moment in which Weatherford threw painterly caution to the wind and had the audacity to place neon tubes, their artfully arranged electrical cords in full view, on top of her paintings.

Not a beer sign

"If the wires ran behind the painting, you'd have a beer sign, not a painting," she says. "Nothing is hidden."

The wires' looping forms, in fact, evoke the delicate, latex rope installations of Eva Hesse. "I was a sculptor when I was an undergraduate," says Weatherford with a wry smile, revealing that nothing in her work is unintentional.

Since 2012, the artist has created paint-and-neon works inspired by the tones and light of New York City, as well the less conspicuous corners of Los Angeles: Pico Rivera, Artesia and Oxnard.

"I've never wanted to make paintings about Sunset Boulevard or the center of Los Angeles," she explains. "I was more interested in the edges of Los Angeles."

The new works at Kordansky feature a more indirect take on her experiences of her environment, but here and there, a title reveals a location — such as "Arroyo walk," from 2017, a vertical canvas that features the steely grey of L.A.'s concrete river banks and a slash of orange that hearkens to construction barricades. A single tube of white neon emerges from a pool of greenish blue.

"They're sublime explorations of atmosphere, ambiance and light," says Kordansky. "They're also commitments of an emotional, subjective kind — physical reflections of moods and positions. They're diaristic indexes of life lived, personal but also political."

At the Marian Miner Cook Athenaeum at Claremont McKenna College hangs a large-scale work from 2014 titled "From the mountain to the sea," which features a roiling mass of inky blues sliced by yellow and white neon lights — godly nature and human artifice on their endless collision course.

Weatherford says she is intrigued by the nature of an atmosphere at a given point in time.

"[Explorer Giovanni di] Verrazzano's entry into New York Harbor and meeting the Native Americans — he writes about what a lovely day it was," she says. "I'm always interested in the weather, what the weather was at a certain time."

"The night the Watts Riots started, it was 8 o'clock and 71 degrees."

carolina.miranda@latimes.com

Knight, Christopher, "Watercolors in sensuous form," *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 2017, p. E2

Los Angeles Times

David Kordansky Gallery

TWO HORIZONTAL neon lines take up space across luxurious paint in Mary Weatherford's "Animals."

Watercolors in sensuous form

CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT
ART CRITIC

Thirteen new Color Field paintings by Mary Weatherford include several that are the largest she has made. Nuanced and self-assured, they show her working in top form.

At just under 10 feet by 20 feet, each of four mural-size abstractions in the first room at David Kordansky Gallery envelops a viewer's field of vision. Clouds of vaporous color slide from thin to dense, shifting hue along the way, their visual energies drawn by tangled movements of the brush or sponge with which the paint was applied.

In some areas, the withdrawal of color by scraping or wiping clean confounds a logical sense of cumulative hue. Impossibly, the white ground underneath sometimes seems to overlap the color, like waves lapping on shore. The strange effect is further enhanced by the linen support that Weatherford employs: Woven with a substantial tooth, it lets bits of color puddle within the threads.

The surface is surprisingly lively, speedy here and languorous there, agitated now and stretching out again. When a viewer pulls in close to scrutinize painterly details, the color of the irregular, handmade lengths of neon glass-tubing and its wiring come into play.

"Animals" is the most richly arrayed painting, heavy in purples and mango orange, flanked by gray and tan. Applied to the surface, one of two horizontal neon lines in bright yellow slips into deep orange halfway across, the juncture between them glowing bright green. Chromatic juxtaposition of evanescent neon and luxurious paint opens up visual space.

Like Helen Frankenthaler or Sam Francis, Weatherford approaches monumental painting on canvas as a sensuous species of watercolor — typically an intimate medium of modest size, but here washing across an entire wall.

Weatherford looks like she's having fun exploring the possibilities, which broke wide open in her work a few years ago. The pleasure is contagious.

David Kordansky Gallery, 5130 W. Edgewood Place, Los Angeles. Through May 6; closed Sundays and Mondays. (323) 935-3030. *davidkordanskygallery.com*

Guadagnino, Kate, “Bright Spot,” *T Magazine*, March 5, 2017, p. 58

This and That

A Cultural Compendium

Weatherford’s “two figures” 2017, on view view at David Kordansky March 10.

Bright Spot

Mary Weatherford is known for her moody abstractions of landscapes both natural and contrived, but her latest series — filling both galleries of David Kordansky in Los Angeles and comprising her largest show to date, at least until an upcoming retrospective at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston — looks inward. “It gets to the question of whether your soul is important enough to paint about,” says Weatherford, who worked as a bookkeeper for Mike Kelley before getting her first real taste of success in 2012, when she started affixing neon rods directly to the canvas. Her new work continues in this vein, with pale shades of paint layered over metallics and muddy grays. Three double-square panoramas measure nearly 10 by 20 feet. Others are immersive in the scale of their brush strokes. “I like the feeling of being smaller than a painting,” Weatherford says. “And I like the feeling of being inside a wave in the ocean.” — KATE GUADAGNINO

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.

MARY WEATHERFORD

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

3.

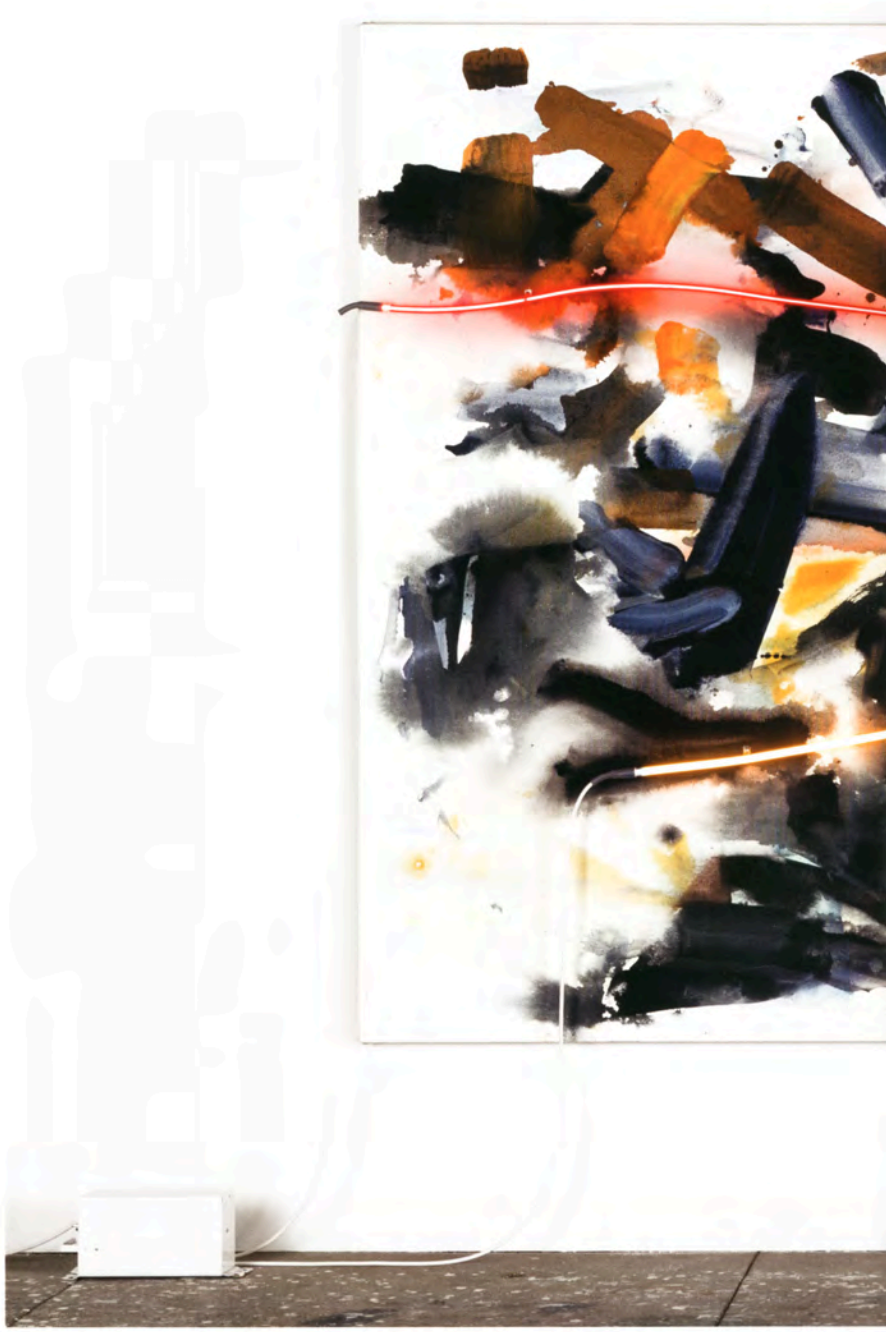
1. Engine, 2014
   Flashe and neon on linen
   297.2 × 264.2 cm / 117 × 104 in

2. Canyon, 2014
   Flashe and neon on linen
   284.5 × 251.5 cm / 112 × 99 in

3. Double Wave at Windansea, 2015
   Flashe and neon on linen
   284.5 × 251.5 cm / 112 × 99 in

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

4. The River, 2015
Flashe and neon on linen
198.1 × 308.6 cm / 78 × 121 ½ in



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MARY WEATHERFORD

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

McMahon, Katherine, “L.A. Habitat: Mary Weatherford,” *ArtNews.com*, April 1, 2016

ARTNEWS

L.A. HABITAT: MARY WEATHERFORD

BY ***Katherine McMahon***
April 1, 2016

Mary Weatherford in her Cypress Park studio on December 8, 2015.

This week’s studio: Mary Weatherford; Cypress Park, Los Angeles.
“Los Angeles is on fire,” Mary Weatherford said, lounging in the outdoor space behind her Cypress Park studio. The Ojai-born, Los Angeles–raised artist called New York home from 1984 to 1999, but ultimately returned to the West Coast. “This is the place to be to make art right now. There’s so much going on all the time—I have an incredible fear of missing out.”

Weatherford’s studio, a space she’s inhabited for two years, is situated in an unassuming building along the heavily trafficked San Fernando Road. She explained that the corridor on which her studio is located is becoming increasingly desirable as more and more condos go up and businesses go in. “Hopefully I won’t get priced out. My previous studio wasn’t nearly as big as this. It was handed down from artist to artist and had been occupied by Laura Owens, Matt Connors, Alex Slade, and Rebecca Morris, to name a few. So much great art was made in that studio,” she said, recalling that her landlord at the time purposefully kept the rent low because he liked having artists as tenants.

Weatherford currently serves on the board of the arts nonprofit Laxart, and described L.A. as a mecca for alternative spaces. “The hallmark of a great arts scene and a healthy city is artist-run spaces, and this place is flourishing. There’s a lot of opportunity,” she said, mentioning 356 Mission, Joan, and BBQ L.A.

In addition to smaller, artist-run endeavors, Weatherford feels that museums on the West Coast are more accessible then ever. “Everyone’s vision is influenced by one’s experiences,” she said, recalling visits to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art as an example of a formative childhood experience. “I remember going to that museum and stopping by the cafeteria to order coconut cream pie. There was a big painting on the wall of the cafeteria there. I think it fostered my love of cafeteria paintings.” Her 2014 mural *From the mountain to the sea* is part of Claremont College’s collection, on view in the dining room of the Marian Miner Cook Athenaeum.

McMahon, Katherine, “L.A. Habitat: Mary Weatherford,” *ArtNews.com*, April 1, 2016

Weatherford has exhibited since the late ’80s and continues a prolific studio practice. “I go through different phases of making work that looks seemingly anomalous to the work that came before,” she said, clarifying, “The themes and ideas that run through the last 40 years of the work are consistent, but the physical manifestation of the themes is very different.” The works in her breakthrough series, “The Bakersfield Project,” in which she debuted her trademark paintings affixed with neon lights in 2012, are named after streets in the California city. A sense of place seems to pervade Weatherford’s work, recently with neon paintings that illustrate Los Angeles and New York but previously with literal depictions of seashells and starfish, which she would source from the California seaside. “I don’t keep a journal,” she said. “I can’t write about myself and my life, but I’ve always thought that my paintings are, in effect, my journal. I can look at a painting and remember what was going on at that time.”

In 2018 the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston will present a survey of Weatherford’s work, curated by Bill Arning. Below, a look around her Los Angeles studio.

Siegel, Katy, ed, *The Heroine Paint: After Frankenthaler*, S.l.: Gagosian / Rizzoli, 2015, p. 242-245

Sam Hunter was my professor at Princeton and I also worked for him as a research assistant, so by the age of eighteen I was all studied up on the New York School. I read about Frankenthaler's work from the 1950s and of course *Mountains and Sea*: I love that it was an invention, that painting. I don't know where I read the story about her climbing a ladder to see the enormous painting, calling in her friends to look, but it sticks with me. So when I decided to make large-scale paintings, in 1989, all of the New York School and Frankenthaler were on my mind.

If anyone decides to make stain paintings, even now they have to consider Frankenthaler. She was there as a pressure when I made my stain paintings. Her later paintings fascinate me with their sometimes utter incompleteness (like her lithographs, which have no image). Sometimes I wished I could leave a painting so incomplete, but I added silkscreened images on top that were particularly feminine, flowers to begin with, to punctuate the stains—I thought of them as stickers on a sliding glass door that stopped you from flying through, stopped you at the surface. Then my stains became giant butterflies and then the flowers became starfish. The starfish paintings came out of the Man Ray film *Emak Bakia*, which has a shot of the ocean rolling in, and then the camera turns upside-down, and the ocean rolls in over your head. So the first starfish painting I made was called *The Ocean is in the Sky*. The stars at the bottom of the sea became stars in the sky. And in the back of my mind were a dozen shell mirrors I saw in Santa Cruz in 1968, leaning against a hedge on the grass outside the art department.

I started thinking about Frankenthaler again when I was making the big cave paintings a few years ago. In 2011, just before the *Cave at Pismo* show opened in New York, I found myself at the Palm Springs Art Museum looking at a large Frankenthaler (*Carousel*, 1979) for a long time. I thought, "The difference between my work and hers is visible *doubt*. I have it, she doesn't." I am sure she had doubts, of course, but the record of them isn't in the paintings. Right around the time when I was looking at the Frankenthaler in Palm Springs, I made the painting *red/blue cave*. It has a last-minute erasure of dark blue. Helen Frankenthaler wouldn't do that. That's the doubt part.

Mary Weatherford

Siegel, Katy, ed, *The Heroine Paint: After Frankenthaler*, S.l.: Gagosian / Rizzoli, 2015, p. 242-245

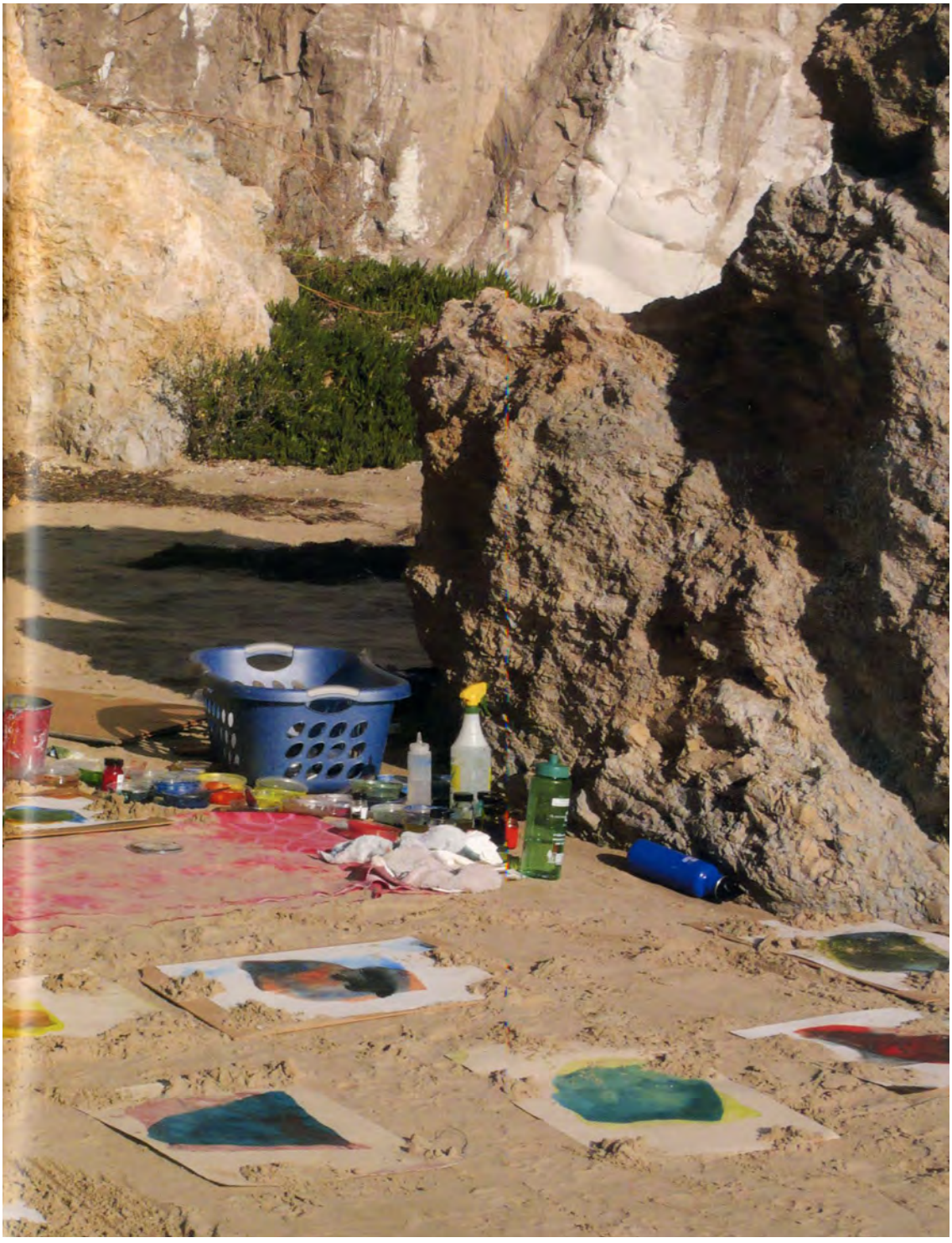
Mary Weatherford, *red/blue cave*, 2011, flashe on linen, 79 × 91 inches (200.7 × 231.1 cm). Private collection, Los Angeles

Siegel, Katy, ed, *The Heroine Paint: After Frankenthaler*, S.l.: Gagosian / Rizzoli, 2015, p. 242-245

Mary Weatherford, works in progress, Pismo Beach, California, 2011

Weatherford's paintings, often evocative of the California landscape, manifest the richness of the correspondence between the genres of landscape and abstraction. Here, her studies are captured in process, resting in the sand.

Siegel, Katy, ed, *The Heroine Paint: After Frankenthaler*, S.l.: Gagosian / Rizzoli, 2015, p. 242-245



Williams, Maxwell, “There’s Something About Mary,” *Cultured Magazine*, Fall 2015, Cover, Contents, p. 170-173

Williams, Maxwell, “There’s Something About Mary,” *Cultured Magazine*, Fall 2015, Cover, Contents, p. 170-173

Contents

FALL 2015

Mary Weatherford’s *the mountain*, 2014

PHOTO BY FREDRIK NILSEN; COURTESY OF DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

Williams, Maxwell, “There’s Something About Mary,” *Cultured Magazine*, Fall 2015, Cover, Contents, p. 170-173

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY

Next month, **Mary Weatherford** takes over David Kordansky's booth at Frieze London, giving contemporary painting a jolt. Maxwell Williams gets illuminated.

PORTRAITS BY ELENA DORFMAN

Williams, Maxwell, “There’s Something About Mary,” *Cultured Magazine*, Fall 2015, Cover, Contents, p. 170-173

Mary Weatherford with *Station Fire*, 2015, a work in progress

Williams, Maxwell, "There's Something About Mary," *Cultured Magazine*, Fall 2015, Cover, Contents, p. 170-173

The new wave paintings are mammoths. When you stand in front of them, you are completely immersed.

Do you want to stand in a bucket?" painter Mary Weatherford asks as she greets me in her new studio in the quiet northeast corner of Los Angeles. It's a sweltering day, and Weatherford has made micro-pools from an array of buckets, which she normally uses to create her soak-stained, rhythmical abstractions.

Cooling off with her feet in a bucket is New York-based painter Katherine Bernhardt, who has just unveiled a mural in L.A., and sitting almost completely submerged in another bucket is her 4-year-old son, Khalifa. Bernhardt and Weatherford met in 2003, when Bernhardt curated a group show called "Girls Gone Wild" at Bronwyn Keenan Gallery in New York. "I remember exactly what I was wearing," says Weatherford, who lived in New York for years before returning to Southern California, where she grew up.

If Weatherford's paintings are her pyramids, her memories are the sandstone blocks that makes them whole. Each of her paintings depicts an experience Weatherford has had—from the sunsets of Bakersfield to the waterways of Red Hook to the cool blue waves of Windansea Beach, a stretch of coastline located in La Jolla, California, where her parents have lived since the '70s. These new wave paintings are mammoths, to the point that when you stand in front of them, you are completely immersed. "I went in during a big swell and got womped," Weatherford says. "But it was fun."

Apart from the colorfully gauzy landscapes and skyscapes, perhaps the most striking part of Weatherford's work since moving from New York back to L.A. is her propensity to lacerate her paintings with neon slashes.

"How did you start working with neon anyway?" Bernhardt asks her. "What happened?"

She began working with neon in January 2012, while a visiting artist at California State University, Bakersfield. Interested in the oil fields, Weatherford went to photograph the area (she notes that a sheriff was worried she might be there to set the fields ablaze and detained her that evening). Struck by the color of the sky—and thinking about a kitschy painting with a neon add-on she had seen at a friend's parents' house—Weatherford carried the seeds of the paintings with her on a trip to New York. She had an epiphany: add neon "like a drawn line" to the paintings. "I was on the Crosstown Bus, thinking, 'This is a great idea... or this is a really bad idea,'" she says.

Many years had gone by since her last big solo exhibition, so in September 2012, Weatherford went all in on the "Bakersfield Project," an exhibition at Todd Madigan Gallery in Bakersfield. She created seven large paintings—79 inches wide and as big as she could fit through her studio door—inspired by the city, past and present. The show was a smashing success, and Weatherford parlayed that into fawned over shows at LA><ART, Brennan & Griffin in Brooklyn and David Kordansky Gallery in L.A. She is now a bona fide star in the eyes of critics, curators and collectors (Leonardo DiCaprio recently purchased her work).

Many of her paintings incorporate the neon. She's keenly aware of when a painting needs it. "I know if I'm going to put a light on it; I paint it to have something missing," she explains. "I know that the painting is empty and lacking enough that it's going to need another element. Sometimes I get going, and I think, 'Wow, that is a painting, and it doesn't need anything else.'"

Weatherford's "Red Hook" exhibition this past summer at Brennan & Griffin, synthesizes many of her creative ideals—she finds a place that has meaning to her, researches it and creates paintings from a combination of historical connotations and personal experiences within the place. For instance, *The Beautiful Lake* references a letter explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano, who was the first to discover the New York Harbor in 1524, wrote to King Francis of his voyage.

"I wanted to make a show about the history of the New York Harbor," says Weatherford. "But I don't like to pin them down too much. They could just be paintings."

For her, it's a new way of working that traces to the fact that her new studio is a well-oiled machine. She paints on a wooden platform in the middle of the room, her buckets all around her, using brushes on sticks and pushing paint with wet sponges, adding and erasing colors and marks. From there she mingles with the canvas, trying to achieve total painterly focus. "I'm preparing for Frieze London in October and I'm in an experimental groove," she says. "Having this studio is my dream."

Weatherford is slowly shifting from history-based paintings to the purely experiential side of things. "It's turning into the summer 2015 highlights," she says of her newest works. "I went on a hike on Mount Baldy. We saw some yellow yuccas, and that's what got me into using yellow in my paintings. Then I went swimming at Windansea Beach. I had to work through the paintings with a backstory, and now I'm up to present day."

Greenberger, Alex, “Mary Weatherford”, Reviews: New York, *ArtNews*, November 2015, p. 98

Mary Weatherford, *past Sunset*, 2015. Flashe and neon on linen, 112" x 99".

MARY WEATHERFORD

BRENNAN & GRIFFIN
MAY 16 - AUGUST 1

Mary Weatherford's neon-and-Flashe paintings here had some relationship to this gallery's new Red Hook, Brooklyn, space. Weatherford has made paintings about New York and Los Angeles, bearing titles that take their names from streets. With this show, titled "Red Hook," Weatherford alluded to the gallery's setting, just blocks from what was once the busiest freight port in the world.

The background of each painting was a shade of blue, referring to water under various natural conditions. In *Canal* (2015) a mess of lemon-yellow, brown, and azure strokes evokes waves and reflections. Three vertical tubes, each a different color, suggest the paths of boats. Meanwhile, in *past Sunset* (2015), a Rorschach test–like blob of navy-blue is pitted against a magenta tube, calling to mind the moment when a sunset's colors are refracted in choppy, darkening waters. These near-ten-foot-tall paintings, done on linen, may have a personal reference for Weatherford, who received her M.F.A. from Bard College, situated near a different Red Hook, in the Hudson Valley, New York. Titles like *Something with Bells* and *July* (both 2015) are vague enough to point to places that have private meanings for Weatherford. Like a cool breeze coming off a riverbank, these paintings were a beautiful reminder of how it is impossible to view places objectively.

ALEX GREENBERGER

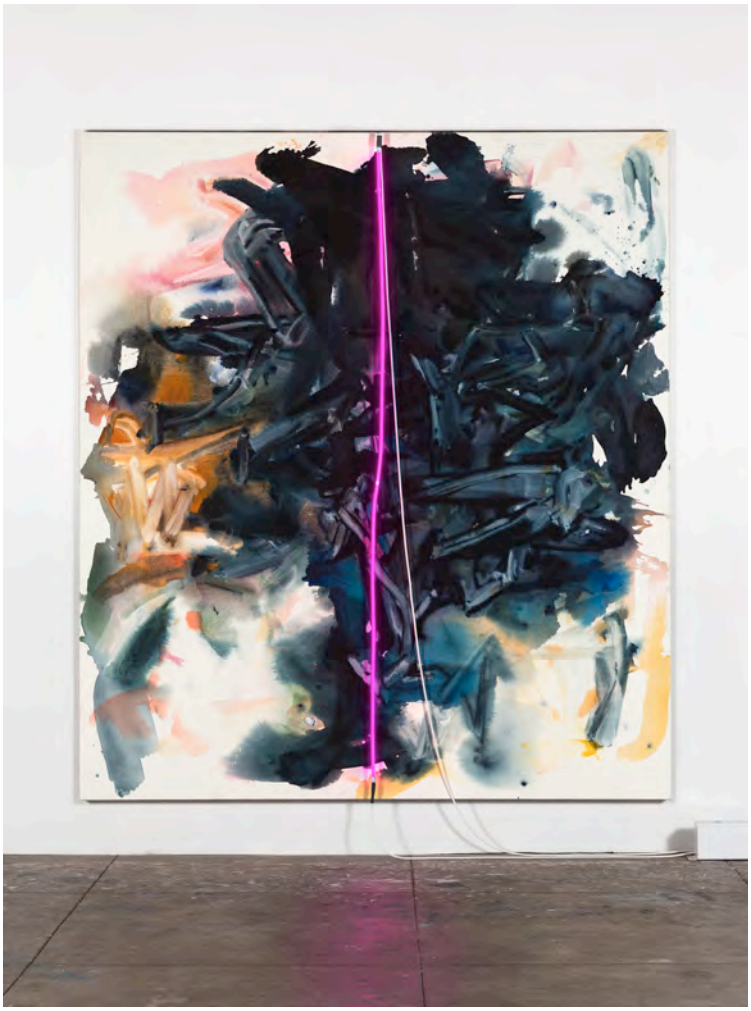
Ebony, David, “Mary Weatherford,” *Art in America*, October 2015

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 allover 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.

Griffin, Nora, “Mary Weatherford Red Hook,” *brooklynrail.org*, July 13, 2015

THE BROOKLYN RAIL
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

Mary Weatherford Red Hook

by Nora Griffin
July 13th, 2015

Mary Weatherford, Engine, 2014. Flashe and neon on linen, 117 × 104 in. Courtesy Brennan & Griffin. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen Studio.

Painters tell themselves stories in order to keep painting. In the case of Mary Weatherford, a Los Angeles-based artist, the stories are connected to specific places and her visual memories of them. Her signature Flashe paint and neon combines have had three prominent iterations: “Manhattan” and “The Bakersfield Paintings” in 2012, and “Los Angeles” in 2014. Her current show, “Red Hook,” inaugurates Brennan & Griffin’s new space in Red Hook, Brooklyn. Weatherford created the suite of eight paintings in tandem with the Lower East Side gallery’s leasing of the former metal castings warehouse earlier this year. The paintings are commanding in scale, measuring 117 × 104″, with one at 112 × 99″. The works are installed vertically in sets of four and three on two facing walls. A single painting anchors the back wall and draws the viewer inside. Located on a quiet side street off the main thoroughfare of Van Brunt Street, the gallery is airy and industrial, with beams of metal and wood supporting an arched ceiling, a cracked and smooth concrete floor, and dark brick walls. An open garage door lets in abundant sunlight and the low level surrounding buildings lend a meditative aura to the show.

Griffin, Nora, "Mary Weatherford Red Hook," *brooklynrail.org*, July 13, 2015

In a departure from Weatherford's previous work, the "Red Hook" paintings embrace a scattered formlessness. They have the countenance of exploding blotting pads, the paint is silky and matte like photographic emulsion, and the colors are high octane. The tumult of strokes calls to mind a flattened Joan Mitchell painting, made by a giant's paw and soaked in water. The messy expressionism knows itself too well to be vulnerable, but the twisted lines of neon add a physicality and emotional presence otherwise lacking in the paint. In Engine (2014) and past Sunset (2015), tubes of orange, pink, and magenta neon are deliciously radiant against mottled blue-black. In other works the neon replicates patches of color and serves as an electrified extension of the watery vinyl paint. The yellow horizontal neon of Out by Coney (2014) levitates over an area of diluted cadmium yellow, and in Canal (2015) a vertical grouping of neon in bright blue, aquamarine, green and red magnify their paint counterpart on the linen's surface. Lush, light cobalt is the leading star of the Beautiful Lake (2015). Red-orange and dirty yellow offset the blues and the colors smear and become more transparent as they push towards the edges of the linen. A short, soft white neon affixed to the lower right corner appears like an object amid this watery mass. The energy of neon white bounces off the milky white of the surface. Subtle shifts in hue from work to work invite the viewer to share in the artist's deeply felt knowledge of color.

Weatherford's paintings have been compared to Barnett Newman's zips, Morris Louis's stained canvases, and the sculptures of Dan Flavin and Keith Sonnier. Beyond these formal similarities, the configuration of neon and absorbent paint offers a new move to the old dance around the limits of abstract painting. What does it mean to attach neon, a cosmic chemical, to a medium and a style that promises infinite returns, yet has been historically debased as "dead." The tubes are screwed into the surface, supported by thin, almost invisible wires, and long sweeping extension cords connect to grey boxy chargers plugged into wall sockets. The paintings breathe in this unholy configuration, as a body on life support remains conscious with the aid of advanced technology.

Griffin, Nora, "Mary Weatherford Red Hook," *brooklynrail.org*, July 13, 2015

On the other side of this intimation of mortality, the paintings undoubtedly seduce with their material presence: the texture and strength of the Belgian linen, the tight stretching on large-scale supports, and the chromatic richness of Flashe. Another pleasure is in the referential nature of the neon colors and forms, most readily apparent in the "Manhattan" series. For instance, in Brooklyn Bridge (2013), two vertical neon strips, warm yellow next to turquoise, are conjoined at their bases by a looping cord, mimicking the bridge's suspension cables. In Palm Reader (2013), a curving line of purple neon is instantly recognizable to New Yorkers as the color of the signage that announces storefront psychics. The light brightens and is absorbed into the purple and black Flashe puddle beneath it.

The blue variations and splashy paint handling of the "Red Hook" paintings imply an equivalency to water, but it is here that an observable relationship to the city's oldest harbor ends. The rest is poetic conjecture. A walk around the neighborhood's streets takes one past industrial complexes, grass lots, 19th-century brick houses, and abandoned factories with crumbling painted signs. Graffiti is prevalent, though not as aggressive tags, but as more indeterminate lines and forms. Pedestrians have the time and space to regard you, and even say hello, an anomaly in New York City. A grey cat lies down in the middle of the street blending in with the tarmac. As the sun sets at Valentino Pier you can observe, all at once, the Statue of Liberty, the glittery mirage of Wall Street, and the journey of an illuminated Staten Island Ferry. Perhaps it was in moments similar to these that Weatherford found her source material. But more importantly than the artist's own relationship to this area, it is the viewer who will emerge from the show with a more complex appreciation of a city in flux and stillness.

Zwick, Tracy, “Present Tense,” *Cultured*, February/March 2015, pp. 170-173

PRESENT TENSE

Everyone is talking about the Museum of Modern Art's contemporary painting exhibition. Tracy Zwick tours the show with its curator **Laura Hoptman** to get in on the conversation.

Zwick, Tracy, “Present Tense,” *Cultured*, February/March 2015, pp. 170-173

"The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World" is on view through April 5.

Zwick, Tracy, "Present Tense," *Cultured*, February/March 2015, pp. 170-173

"This is not about revelations for the avaricious art collector. It isn't about discovering the undiscovered. This is about looking at the state of culture—a state of atemporality partly caused by our consumerism—through great paintings. And I do believe we have some great paintings here."

—Laura Hoptman

There've been a lot of interesting arguments and a lot of things have pissed people off about this exhibition," says Museum of Modern Art curator Laura Hoptman of her exhibition "The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World." "It's been many years since we've had a contemporary painting show at MoMA. So this one has an inordinate weight... but it shouldn't." The exhibit, which features 17 artists, nine of whom are female is "a bunch of artists gathered around a very particular, very contentious premise," she says, which is that "timelessness is what is timely in painting... and what makes these works particular to today."

The exhibition's conceit suggests that when looking at these works, a viewer can't really tell if they were created last week or at some other point in Western 20th-century history because our time's signature is a nonhierarchical mix of styles and elements. "Forever Now" includes nearly 90 works, ranging from 28-year-old Colombian-born Oscar Murillo's Rauschenberg-inflected canvases, eight of which lie in a pile on the floor for visitors to handle, to 59-year-old Brooklyn-based Amy Sillman's abstractions, hanging traditionally on a wall, but juxtaposing references to digital animation and Giorgio Morandi. Richard Aldrich's exquisitely tiny *Slide Painting #3 (looking origin)* contrasts with Matt Connors' 216-foot-wide *Variable Foot*, a Barnett Newman zip-style color-field canvas in Jasper Johns' Americana palette. It was created especially for this show, as was work by Nicole Eisenman and Laura Owens.

"She didn't give me easy pictures," says Hoptman of Owens' two large-scale canvases that hang across from one another. "She is truly a horizontal painter; she gives us a panoply of mark-making techniques and it's all equal. There's no hierarchy between the brushstroke and the silkscreen and the digital mark." Owens' soaring *Untitled* of painterly anthropomorphic splotches over a blowup of want ads hangs majestically in the museum's lobby. It's the exhibition's de facto announcement and an enchanting emblem.

That 2013 painting is already part of MoMA's permanent collection, as are included works by Joe Bradley, Mary Weatherford, Michael Williams, Kerstin Brätsch and Josh Smith. In fact, works by 12 of the 17 artists are already held by MoMA, and according to Hoptman, more works by artists in the show may be acquired in the future.

The market-blessed status of many artists, along with the fact that myriad works are exhibited courtesy of commercial galleries (making them presumably for sale) has rankled some critics.

"The notion that these are established artists with long resumes and who we believe in... I completely cop to that," says Hoptman. "This is not about revelations for the avaricious art collector. It isn't about discovering the undiscovered. This is about looking at the state of culture—a state of atemporality partly caused by our consumerism—through great paintings. And I do believe we have some great paintings here."

As for the brouhaha over borrowing from commercial galleries, Hoptman asks, "What other way does one do it in the contemporary art world?" She says she borrowed most of the work from the artists themselves and went so far as to advise Murillo not to include a courtesy line crediting his gallery. (He did anyway.) "He's a lightning rod," Hoptman acknowledges, having enjoyed a meteoric rise in recognition and price followed by a recent slowdown. "He gave me very good pictures. We switched five times I think. These were wet when they arrived," she says, pointing to Murillo's pile. "They hold their own."

And that says something. Opposite Murillo's Twombly-esque curls are stiffer scrawlings by MacArthur Fellowship and Goldman Sachs commission-winning Julie Mehretu. "I told her I'm not showing anything that has a grid underneath it! But she changed, she developed." According to Hoptman, Mehretu's previous work was "about control, mapping and a historical narrative. What's interesting is the freedom in the work. She achieved something here, and the platform for this kind of achievement is MoMA."

Mehretu's senior by two years, fellow American Mark Grotjahn dominates a large wall early in the show with three paint-packed primitivism-tinged mask works. Nearby, Rashid Johnson's Cosmic Slop paintings quietly smolder. "He's not being subtle about the connection to his moment," says Hoptman. "He calls a painting *Cosmic Slop 'The Berlin Conference'*—an event in which Africa was divided—in which he used black soap and wax and made marks on the floor using a broomstick." Hoptman sees Johnson "reenacting action painting and testing the medium, asking whether it can bear the burden of the meaning he needs to have in all his pictures."

German-born Kerstin Brätsch and her one-time teacher Charline von Heyl are working "in and against a tradition of postwar German painting, most obviously that of Sigmar Polke," says Hoptman. But, like Owens, "Their subject is the idea of painting itself." Dianna Molzan, tackles the same subject, but by formal contrast. "She takes a stretcher bar and support and asks, 'What can you do?'" It's tough, like Lucio Fontana, Piero Manzoni and Frank Stella, Hoptman argues. "The work is winsome, but people don't talk about her and she's not represented."

As for the show's impact: "On a single day in January, MoMA had 25,000 visitors," Hoptman reports. "Most of those people didn't know Richard Aldrich, for example, and maybe one of those people had their life changed by him. That is the beauty of this platform."

To those who've interpreted her show as suggesting the impossibility of newness in painting, she counters, "You can't look at the aliveness in these rooms and say that painting is stalled. Painting just isn't going to the moon. We have to maybe rethink our notion of the new, and I think these artists have. I really do."

Solway, Diane and Fan Zhong, “Brushes with Greatness,” *W Art*, December 2014/January 2015, pp. 90, 92

BRUSHES WITH *GREATNESS*

W visits the studios of eight women painters—and finds not a single wallflower in the bunch.

Photographs by Stefan Ruiz

Looking at the landscape of major museum shows last fall, the journalist Deborah Solomon couldn't help but note that "this is an art season that could make you think that the feminist movement never happened." Sure, plenty of women are enjoying booming careers (Cindy Sherman, Yayoi Kusama, and Marlene Dumas, to name a few), but gender disparity—in museums and certainly at the auction block—persists. Perhaps nowhere has that imbalance been more pronounced than in painting, long considered the domain of the macho male. But beginning December 14 (through April 5, 2015), that attitude will get some serious adjustment with the opening of "The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World," the Museum of Modern Art's (MoMA) first zeitgeisty painting show in 30 years. In casting her net for the survey, MoMA curator Laura Hoptman ended up visiting more women than men. It wasn't intentional, she says, noting, "It's just that that's where the interesting painting is coming from." Her show spotlights 17 prominent contemporary painters, nine of them female, who sample different styles, approaches, and art historical genres. Hoptman focused on the United States and Europe, where, as she sees it, painters are "beyond the idea that each innovation in art is a progress toward some goal. With the Internet, everything exists at once in culture. So the work reflects a horizontal time line, not a vertical one." In these pages, we salute many of the female painters changing the scene. And it's perhaps fitting that "The Forever Now" will run concurrently with a major MoMA retrospective devoted to Sturtevant, the pioneering female artist, who, in the '60s and '70s, anticipated the age of appropriation with her remakes of masterworks by Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, and Joseph Beuys. Like many of the women in Hoptman's show, Sturtevant, who passed away earlier this year at 89, remains relatively unknown in this country—at least for the moment. "Women artists," Hoptman says, "are defining our time now." DIANE SOLWAY

Solway, Diane and Fan Zhong, “Brushes with Greatness,” *W Art*, December 2014/January 2015, pp. 90, 92

MARY WEATHERFORD

Bakersfield, California, has long figured in Mary Weatherford's imagination as the place where her family's car would overheat during road trips to Yosemite National Park—the breakdowns were so frequent, they were memorialized in a 2011 short story in *The Paris Review* by the artist's late sister, Margaret Weatherford, who wrote of "the station wagon that smelled perpetually of vomit." Then, in 2012, Mary (*above*, with *From the Mountain to the Sea*, 2014) returned there for an artist residency and boned up on the history of the place, ultimately creating her breakthrough Bakersfield series—moody layers of paint lit by neon tubes affixed to the surface. "I'm about to start telling you about Bakersfield," warns the Los Angeles–based painter, 51, before launching into a breakneck monologue that touches on the Dust Bowl, the oil rush, *The Grapes of Wrath*, Dorothea Lange, Merle Haggard, honky-tonks, the Tea Party, the Ku Klux Klan, and dinosaurs. Thrown in are an impression of Jackson Pollock and a rendition of a Beatles song. She does the extensive research, she says, to "get to my paintings." Since 2012, she has shown two other series of pictures of places (she prefers not to call them landscapes or abstractions) that incorporate neon fixtures. As with Bakersfield, in her depictions of New York and Los Angeles, the paint represents the sky; the lights the people that live—and have lived—there. "Don't get me started on the history of Coney Island," Weatherford says. F.Z.

"50 Women Artists Worth Watching," *Art+Auction*, September 2014

50 WOMEN ARTISTS WORTH WATCHING

ART+AUCTION PEGS THE MAKERS, BOTH ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING, THAT THE MARKET IS BUZZING ABOUT

Wouldn't it be nice to think that a gender-delimited list is no longer relevant? It's true that to be a practicing woman artist today is hardly the struggle it would have been in Mary Cassatt's era. Women artists are actively acquired by museums and honored with major surveys and retrospectives; recent names in the spotlight include Julia Margaret Cameron, Rineke Dijkstra, Zarina Hashmi, Sarah Lucas, Cindy Sherman, Lorna Simpson, Rosemarie Trockel, Carrie Mae Weems, and Francesca Woodman. Collectors pounce on new inventory by Marlene Dumas, Julie Mehretu, and Dana Schutz. Many women artists are doing well, even very well, thanks to committed galleries and ecumenical collectors. Dealers boast of higher private sale prices than public ones for their female artists. Yet there remains a glass ceiling in the salesroom.

Time and again, the specialists and dealers we spoke to emphasized that the prices commanded on the block were by no means a measure of the works in question in terms of critical acclaim or artistic value. Connoisseurs in search of excellence, they say, would be wise to ignore gender outright—especially if considering works of the 50 artists we have highlighted here, whose critical reputations outstrip their value in the marketplace.

The women in this group, ranging from deceased to emerging, were selected because their contributions seem not to have been fully registered by the market. Many of the artists we chose have either a challengingly conceptual practice or a very wide-ranging one that resists easy categorization. Some were simply ahead of their time. To the extent that dollar value has come to determine the actual worth of these objects in circulation, it is our hope that with visibility, more value will accrue to them. **–THE EDITORS**

“50 Women Artists Worth Watching,” *Art+Auction*, September 2014

MARY WEATHERFORD | B. 1963 | UNITED STATES

Armed with Princeton and Whitney Independent Study Program pedigrees, Weatherford netted a solo show at PS1 in New York in 1989 for her nonobjective paintings, but the economic falloff of the early 1990s meant market success was revoked as quickly as it came. She kept on, addressing the unanswered questions of modernism through such series as targets and flowers that subverted forms trademarked by Johns and Warhol while challenging essentialist feminism. For the past decade or so she has turned her attention to landscapes near her native Los Angeles, mapping subtly coded impressions of light and space. Her dealer there, David Kordansky (she is shown in New York by Brennan & Griffin), says, “We’re talking about an artist who’s not just thinking about form, light, space, composition, color—she’s also interested in politics and in pushing the medium forward. She’s the real deal.” The addition of strips of neon as a formal element circa 2012 literally electrified her lauded canvases, which are hoarded by collectors. They cleaned out Kordansky’s supply at Weatherford’s show in May, at prices ranging from $35,000 to $120,000, hip to tips that she’ll be included in MOMA’s zeitgeisty painting show “The Forever Now” this December. **–SPH** | ***1969*, 2014. FLASHE AND NEON ON LINEN, 93½ X 79½ X 4⅛ IN.**

Meyer, Megan, “Light and Space,” *C Magazine*, September 2014

C MAGAZINE

CULTURE

FROM TOP An exhibit at David Kordansky's former space. Mary Weatherford at LA><ART standing beside *Ruby I (Thrifty Mart)*, 2012. *love forever (cave) for MW*, 2012, LACMA.

Light and Space

Artist **Mary Weatherford** is having a moment. And if the fact that her luminous Flashe oil paintings appear in both LACMA's new group show, "Variations," and MoMa's forthcoming December survey, "The Forever Now," doesn't convince you of this, then perhaps the raves she received for her recent solo show, "Los Angeles," at the David Kordansky Gallery (see "New Digs," below) will. Need further proof? At press time, she was unreachable at an artist retreat in Mexico. And the surest sign that someone is in demand is that they're off the grid.

The Ojai native has been prolific since the '80s, but it was her 2012 "Bakersfield Project," a series of abstract, color-swathed canvases that take cues from modernist Helen Frankenthaler and are finished with neon strips of light, that electrified the art world. The pieces prompted Robert Faggen, Claremont McKenna College's director of the Gould Center for Humanistic Studies, to tap Weatherford for an on-campus installation: a 117-by-234-inch mural (due to be christened with an open-to-the-public event on Sept. 16). Weatherford began by steeping herself in her setting. "It's a long process of assessing the place and reacting to it," Faggen observes. "She's playing with paint and light in a way that's magical—the neon is not about nostalgia," he adds. Indeed, for her, it's the future that's bright. *claremontmckenna.edu*.

Williams, Maxwell, “Mary Weatherford: L.A. Confidential,” *ArtinAmerica.com*, May 19, 2014

Art in America

NEWS MAY 19, 2014

Mary Weatherford: L.A. Confidential

by Maxwell Williams

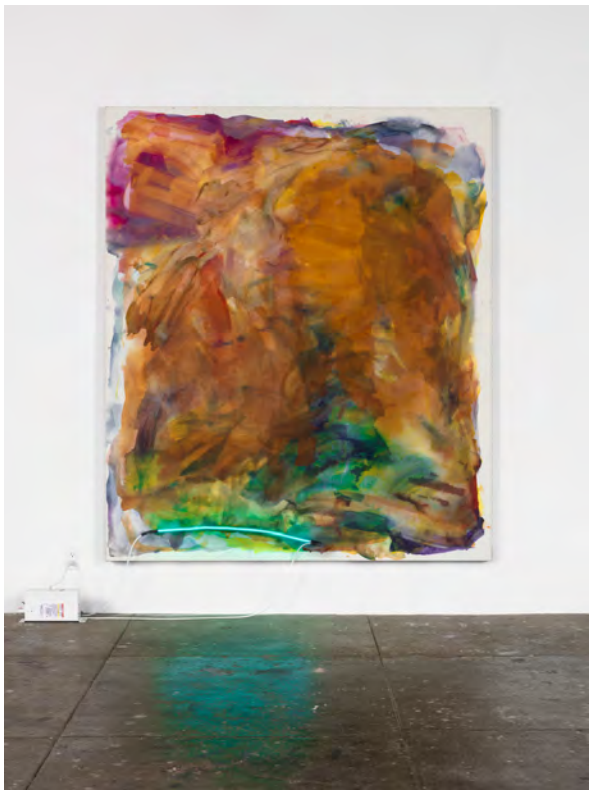
Mary Weatherford was sitting in the middle of Los Angeles’s David Kordansky Gallery the day before the opening of her show “Los Angeles” (through May 31), her first with the gallery, inspecting her new paintings. Hanging on the walls were large color-driven abstract paintings, each with a neon light or three, the cords dangling bare, leading into transformers on the floor. Weatherford was racking her brain for memories or moods that connect the “Los Angeles” part of her mind with the part that paints the abstractions in hopes of finding that “voilà” moment that would spur her recall, because something was missing.

“There’s one last painting that needs a title,” said the L.A.-based artist, 51, her flecked eyes intensely scanning the canvas. The painting in question—a bleary murk that might be mistaken for lingering nightfall (or more accurately the “magic hour” that cinematographers call the fading light of sundown), punctuated with a bolt of neon light affixed to the canvas—will ultimately be called 1969, a year that is pregnant with history both societal and personal.

“I knew that I had to make a Los Angeles show,” said Weatherford, who moved with her family to Los Angeles from nearby Ojai at the height of the Civil Rights movement, in the late ‘60s. The personal elements are purposefully obscured—the paintings, after they are finished, take on a meaning to Weatherford, and the titles are buried clues to the diaristic impulse. The canvases in the current show feature titles like over Rose Hills (Rose Hills is a cemetery in Whittier, Calif.), Oxnard Ventura, the light in Lancaster (famous for its blooming poppy fields), and apparition in Artesia, each laying out some raw sentiment, whether experiential or mood-driven: family histories and personal memorials abound in the work, but remain obfuscated.

Williams, Maxwell, "Mary Weatherford: L.A. Confidential," *ArtinAmerica.com*, May 19, 2014

Weatherford has worked with the concept of place for many years, but the neons added another level to her work. Despite being active since the '80s, her true breakout show wasn't until 2012, "The Bakersfield Project," at the Todd Madigan Gallery at California State University at Bakersfield, where she was invited to conceive of a show for which she could collaborate with students. The Bakersfield paintings, in much the same way the L.A. paintings are about Weatherford's history of Los Angeles, were made in similarly abstract ways about the weird central California town known for oil fields and pistachios. Not being the type of painter that cedes the actual paintbrush, Weatherford originally came up with the idea of adhering neons to the work simply as a way to include the students. The show eventually traveled to LA><.



Her later 2012 show "Manhattan," at Brennan & Griffin, featured similar location-painting-plus-neons that Weatherford saw as conveying narratives of everyday life related to her time in New York in the '80s (Varick St. was stepping onto the street in the morning, Wonder Wheel was a trip down to Coney Island, and Empire represented glancing up at the Empire State Building on the way home in the evening).

That show was a look back. After graduating from Princeton, she toiled in New York until 1999, when she moved back to Southern California. She received critical acceptance in the years following, but seemed to be caught in a state of perpetual emergence-reviews in ArtForum and the New York Times in the mid-2000s, inclusion in Christopher Knight's 2007 "45 Painters Under 45" article in the L.A. Times, selection to the 2008 California Biennial, a Rachel Kushner article calling her a "new blue chip" artist in 2009. Last year, an anonymous poll of curators, gallerists, and advisors identified her as one of "L.A.'s Hottest Artists." [For the record, the author of this article organized the poll.]

In "Los Angeles," her history with the city erupts onto the canvas. Each painting carries a memory or a feeling from her past, albeit with abstract execution—more like representations of an idea of a place. The paintings become gauzy mindscapes (not landscapes, mind you, but something much more vulnerable and cerebral), rendered with Flashe vinyl-based acrylic paint that stains and swirls on the canvas in color fields, before being lyrically interrupted by thin vines of colored neon light. The neon causes a push-and-pull with the viewer's attention, at times drawing the eye towards it, and at other times disappearing into a negative space that frames the paintings underneath, highlighting the canvas. Shadows play behind the neons, adding new levels of texture, while the cords from the lights themselves act as sculptural, draped lines.

Williams, Maxwell, "Mary Weatherford: L.A. Confidential," *ArtinAmerica.com*, May 19, 2014

When prodded for specificity, Weatherford provides scant details into her Angeleno past. "My childhood was swimming lessons in Inglewood, and then going over to Exposition Park and then up to [the Los Angeles County Museum of Art]," where she would see the seminal 1971 "Art and Technology" exhibition at the receptive age of nine—the show paired artists like Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, Richard Serra, Rockne Krebs, Robert Irwin and James Turrell with tech-oriented corporations like Kaiser Industries, GE and IBM. Later, after Weatherford moved to the East Coast to study at Princeton, she would find a catalog of the show in the library there, leading her to identify the works she had had stored in her mind.

"My introduction to the broader possibilities of art happened on a field trip to see that show," she said about her early education to contemporary practice. The LACMA show's convergence of historical art practices and technological innovation are hinted at in Weatherford's simultaneous use of abstract paint and neon as a paint stroke. For their part, the painted areas flirt historically with 1960s Color Field works—particularly Ronnie Landfield and Helen Frankenthaler—and some of the neons "zip" down the middle like a plugged-in Barnett Newman.

"The thing that unites these as 'Los Angeles' paintings is the light—not the neons, but in the painting," Weatherford said, pointing out the grays, browns, ochres and greens that play off each other formally. "Los Angeles used to have 'smog days,' when you didn't have to go to school. I was aware of living in a smog basin from the time I was little. So, what I tried to do in this show was to make the colors dirty."

To Weatherford, the neons could be the city lights of the Los Angeles she's conjuring, but more than that, they solved a problem she'd been struggling with for years.

"When I had the idea about the lights two years ago, I realized that it was a way to make a painting about the city and about the 20th century," Weatherford said. "It's electricity. It's Modernism."

Images: Mary Weatherford, *1969*, 2014, Flashe and neon on linen, 93 1/3 by 79 1/2 by 4 1/8 inches. Courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, Calif. Photo Fredrik Nilsen.

Mary Weatherford, *over Rose Hills*, 2014, Flashe and neon on linen 93 1/2 by 79 1/2 by 3 3/4 inches. Courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, Calif. Photo Fredrik Nilsen.

Mary Weatherford, *over Rose Hills* (detail), 2014, Flashe and neon on linen 93 1/2 by 79 1/2 by 3 3/4 inches. Courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, Calif. Photo Fredrik Nilsen.

Cha, Olivian, “Critics’ Picks: Mary Weatherford,” *Artforum.com*, May 6, 2014

ARTFORUM

Los Angeles

Mary Weatherford

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY
3143 South La Cienega Boulevard, Unit A
April 19–May 31

Mary Weatherford, *1969*, 2014, flashe and neon on linen, 93 1/4 x 79 1/5 x 4 1/8”

Following a series of exhibitions titled “The Bakersfield Project,” “The Bakersfield Paintings” and “Manhattan,” (all 2012), “Los Angeles” is Mary Weatherford’s fourth show of neon-light paintings that takes inspiration from the places she has lived. As in her former work, lines of light in various colors, lengths, and convexities uniquely illuminate each of the seven paintings on view here—but the color palette compared is decidedly less pavonine. Flashe paint is applied in thin but muddled layers that permeate each canvas with a kind of dirty acrylic pollution. In most of the pieces, brighter hues of pink, yellow, and orange are weighed down by washes of deep blue purples, marshy greens, and black. *Light in Lancaster*, painted in vibrant, tannic shades of orange, is the exception: Heavily worked surfaces are evidenced by repetitive, gestural brush strokes that garble colors but also challenge the margins of their linen support, sometimes touching and other times retracting from the edges of the canvas. In contrast, Weatherford’s brilliant neon lines effortlessly rewrite the structural boundaries of painting by casting light in three dimensions, against painterly surface and viewer simultaneously. Neon has its own aesthetic history, which has traversed Las Vegas kitsch, Minimalism, and Conceptual art but rarely the painterly sublime.

Locational marginality is further addressed in the titles of her paintings: *Oxnard Ventura*, *apparition in Artesia*, and *the light in Lancaster* identify suburbs and industrial cities on the outer fringes of the metropolis for which the show is named. Weatherford’s privilege of place and geographic

specificity in the conception of her works also offers a compelling proposition for how painting might newly articulate sociospatial production and meaning. By exposing the cords, electrical transformers, and hardware that charge her neon lines, Weatherford’s paintings render the city not only as landscape (or abstract expression) but as network: a series of electrified canvases that signal both topology and topography. Each painterly node is connected to the others by wires that circulate a single source of energy; this gives the paintings a sculptural and spatial register and, more importantly, a social one. This material interconnectedness is perhaps just one response to the possibility of metaphysical inquiry in a late-capitalist society.

-Olivian Cha

Drohojowska-Philp, Hunter, “Mary Weatherford at David Kordansky Gallery,” *KCRW.com*, May 1, 2014

Art Talk

Mary Weatherford at David Kordansky Gallery

Thurs May 1, 2014

Host: Hunter Drohojowska-Philp

Installation view of Mary Weatherford, Los Angeles at David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, California

If you thought that the soft focus Color Field painting of Helen Frankenthaler couldn’t be revisited successfully by a contemporary artist, you wouldn’t be alone. How could an artist paint thinned acrylics onto raw canvas without seeming as though he or she was copying that group of artists who were propelled to stardom by the critic Clement Greenberg in the 1960’s?

Drohojowska-Philp, Hunter, “Mary Weatherford at David Kordansky Gallery,” *KCRW.com*, May 1, 2014

But now there is Mary Weatherford, an artist who has been gathering attention for her accomplished abstract paintings for some time. The paintings themselves have grown grand and romantic, darkly dashing and dynamic, tossing and turning with light and shade like the windy skies of a Turner seascape. Each bears an unlikely addition: a bar or two of neon with its electrical cord and equipment exposed. The combination is startling. When similar works were exhibited in New York, the Times critic Roberta Smith used a most astute phrase. She described her art has having an “ecumenical historical awareness.”

Mary Weatherford, “the light in Lancaster,” 2014
Flashe and neon on linen, 112.25 x 99.25 x 4.375 inches, (285.1 x 252.1 x 11.1 cm)

Mary Weatherford, “Oxnard Ventura,” 2014, Flashe and neon on linen, 112.5 x 100 x 4.375 inches (285.8 x 254 x 11.1 cm)

Titled Los Angeles, on view at David Kordansky Gallery through May 31, this show includes seven rectangular linen canvases in the range of eight to ten feet tall and almost as wide in vertical orientation, which fights any easy attempt to see them as traditional landscapes. Yet, landscape is at least partially in the mix. Named for various points around Southern California, such as the particularly spectacular the light in Lancaster, 2014 she brushes a paint called Flashe in loose gestures of tangerine, copper, and rose. An angled bar of neon is attached over the completed painting but manages to accentuate rather than compete with the rich layers of color.

Drohojowska-Philp, Hunter, “Mary Weatherford at David Kordansky Gallery,” *KCRW.com*, May 1, 2014

Mary Weatherford, “Oxnard Ventura,” 2014, Flashe and neon on linen, 112.5 x 100 x 4.375 inches (285.8 x 254 x 11.1 cm)

She did a series for New York but the LA paintings made me think of moments of driving when the sky is a delirious riot of sunlight and fog or bruised nocturnal shades and you pass a neon sign for gas or beer. LA offers that momentary cocktail of the mystic and the urban and Weatherford captures that special thrill in these paintings. For more information, go to DavidKordanskyGallery.com.

Knight, Christopher, “Review: Mary Weatherford’s seductive paintings marvels of abstraction,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 2014, pp. D1, D3

AROUND THE GALLERIES

Abstract flashes of genius

CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT
ART CRITIC

Seven large recent paintings by Mary Weatherford are marvelous excursions into territories of abstraction. Her work has been developing rapidly in the last several years, building complex momentum and self-assurance. These new paintings are the finest I've seen.

For many years nature has been a touchstone for Weatherford's work, whether depicting figurative tangles of underbrush and vine-encrusted arbors or simply vaporous atmosphere. (Earlier abstractions are in a current group show at the Pasadena Armory.) These she filters through the unavoidable artifice of modern life, using conscious painterly abstraction as a foil.

The suite of paintings at David Kordansky Gallery, all made this year, is collectively titled "Los Angeles." (In 2012 a fine series called "Bakersfield" was shown nearby at LAXART, while one titled "Manhattan" was shown in New York, where the Califor-

[See Galleries, D3]

FREDRIK NILSEN David Kordansky Gallery

NEON TUBES puncture the surface of Mary Weatherford's "Oxnard Ventura."

Knight, Christopher, "Review: Mary Weatherford's seductive paintings marvels of abstraction," *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 2014, pp. D1, D3

Bright flashes of inspiration

[**Galleries,** from D1]
nia native lived from 1984 to '99.) All are entirely abstract, yet an absorbing sense of place is as specific within each canvas rectangle as it is in the environment outside.

Roughly 8 or 9 feet high and as much as 8½ feet wide, each painting is vertical. Vaporous fields of color are composed over a white ground using gestural strokes of Flashe, a vinyl-based acrylic paint that is simultaneously translucent and chromatically rich. Thin layers are applied to rather heavy linen, its chunky tooth providing sturdy contrast to the paint's soft, matte, opaque surface.

Rich color becomes as substantive as the physical support, even though it has no real heft. The painted forms, which recall the work of Color Field painters of the 1950s and '60s like Helen Frankenthaler, Sam Francis and Morris Louis, are almost always self-contained, rarely touching the canvas' edge. Dark and brooding or hot and evanescent, the shapes seem to billow, like rising smoke or gathering clouds.

In the most audacious move, Weatherford "draws" over the painted surfaces with one, two or three neon tubes. She lets the draped electrical cords essential to powering their glowing artificial light become an integral part of the composition. (The chords continue out of the picture, leading to a small transformer on the floor.) Eccentric and whimsical, the Post-Minimal sensuality of Keith Sonnier's late-1960s and '70s glass-and-neon installations enters the scene.

None of Weatherford's linear glass tubes are straight; instead, their slight ripples, meanderings or irregular curves emphasize the light's tactile, handmade qualities. She distributes the tubes sparingly. Simply bolted to the surface, they appear placed according to the internal rhythms of the paint. Their flash performs in concert with the Flashe.

Even though nothing literal is depicted, your mind wants to read these paintings as landscapes — as bursts of lightning amid thunderclouds or beckoning commercial signage in competition with the dawn. Yet while Weatherford has titled many works with place-names — "the light in Lancaster," for instance, and "Oxnard Ventura" — you'd be hard-pressed to locate in them any particular identifying feature of those locales.

Early 20th century abstraction went the other way, expressing faith that colors, shapes and lines could be powerful reflections of an artist's inner life, rather than the outer world. On that, too, Weatherford's seductive paintings likewise pull the plug (pardon the pun). They suggest, instead, that great abstraction is a field for projection of manifold human desires — hers and ours, in equal measure.

David Kordansky Gallery, Unit A, 3143 S. La Cienega Blvd., Culver City, (310) 558-3030, through May 31. Closed Sun. and Mon. *www.davidkordanskygallery.com*

Schwabsky, Barry, "Mary Weatherford," *Artforum*, Reviews, December 2012, p. 277

Mary Weatherford

BRENNAN & GRIFFIN

Mary Weatherford moved from New York back to her native Southern California in 1999. Ever since, her abstract paintings have drawn their inspiration from the landscape of her home state, focusing on motifs such as a coastal rock at Malibu or a cave at Pismo Beach, as well as on less geographically specific details such as tangles of vine or the remnants of sea life that wash up on the shore. Weatherford is not afraid to wear these inspirations on her sleeve, even at the risk of seeming naive: Over the years, she's repeatedly affixed seashells and starfish to her fields of exuberant color. If this makes them more redolent of a summer camp arts-and-crafts project than of high-style painting, so be it: A lot of the best art of our time works by breaching rather than recoiling from the boundaries of kitsch, and Weatherford has shown herself to be as daring as she is sophisticated in what's been called the "embarrassed lyricism" of her flirtations with the saccharine.

Weatherford's recent abstract paintings incorporating neon tubes don't quite touch the same chords of sentiment as those beachcomber reveries, but they do compromise the purity of the painted canvas in related and equally debatable ways, and they likewise play on nostalgia—this time for the city she left behind more than a decade ago. But while the show was called "Manhattan," and the individual paintings bore titles such as *Varick St.* and *Chinatown* (all works 2012), you'd have been hard put to make out any specific references to the sights of the city then or now. My guess is that the New York that these works refer to is the one that subsists in the paintings of those who flourished here in the four decades preceding Weatherford's own arrival in 1984, mainly the Abstract Expressionists and Color Field painters, the Pollocks and de Koonings, but also the Frankenthalers and Olitskis—which means, in turn, the art-historically validated together with the critically sidelined.

Mary Weatherford, *Empire*, 2012. Flashe paint and neon on linen, 105 x 79".

Painting with Flashe, a vinyl-based paint that allows for effects of gouachelike translucency without loss of chromatic vibrancy, even when the paint is densely layered, Weatherford evokes Technicolor skies in *Chinatown* and *Coney Island*—has she forgotten that this particular peninsula is not in the borough of her title?—while in *Empire* and *Varick St.*, she delves into nocturnal subtleties that even Whistler might have appreciated. Either way, her color is ravishing—but it always fades out well before the edge of the canvas, framing and thereby distancing her abstract imagery. Yet strangely, the device that should press Weatherford's painted gestures even farther into the background—her use of neon light—succeeds in incorporating her painted color into its garish yet somehow delicate atmosphere, thereby lending the chroma a renewed sense of immediacy. This is perhaps least true in *Coney Island*, in which three neon hues—white, yellow, and blue—blend with the painted ones yet not with each other. But in the other three paintings here, in each of which just a single tube crosses the painting either vertically, like an artificial Barnett Newman "zip," or horizontally, the retro glow functions beautifully as a clarion climax to a coloristic symphony. And then the casually exposed wiring and hardware bring us back coolly to the workaday world that is also, after all, Manhattan.

—*Barry Schwabsky*

Peetz, John Arthur, "Mary Weatherford," *Artforum.com*, Critics' Picks, September 28, 2012

ARTFORUM

Mary Weatherford

BRENNAN & GRIFFIN
55 Delancey Street
September 9–October 14

Los Angeles–based artist Mary Weatherford is quite the mistress of illusion—or allusion, as it were. Through her adept utilization of a variety of techniques and material manipulations, she conjures a phantasmagoria of postwar artistic references—from Helen Frankenthaler to Lucio Fontana, and Dan Flavin to Barnett Newman—while also imprinting her own point of view. Her current exhibition, "Manhattan," consists of a series bearing the same title: five mixed-media painterly impressions of New York City rendered from memory. Weatherford has a long history in the city: She attended the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program after graduating from Princeton in 1984, and she lived in New York until 1999. Since then, she has lived in Los Angeles, and has spent the greater part of the past decade exploring the tactile quality of her chosen medium, Flashe on linen.

Mary Weatherford, *Empire*, 2012, Flashe and neon on linen, 105 x 79".

Her new works depict her evolution in materiality and experiments in recall. Take, for example, *Empire* (all works 2012), where the washed-out gradients of dusky teals and rosy blush are absorbed and contained by the linen canvas while a darker black wash veils the body of the brushstrokes. A bright and garish latitudinal inroad of thin smutty-red neon lighting, stretching beyond the painting to the naked top and bottom of the canvas, bisects the work. The electrical line hovers on top of the paint, calling to mind the spire on top of the Empire State building; the rest of the details of this urban scene have apparently fallen casualty to Weatherford's memory. The sparseness of the paint in "Manhattan" when engaged by the various neon incursions—including the fixtures' white electrical cords, which hang bare from the works—produces the sensation of a hazily familiar New York, calling to mind the seedy Times Square of the 1970s in *Midnight Cowboy*. In Weatherford's jubilant piece *Chinatown* a blue neon bar at the bottom exalts and intensifies the artist's cacophonous memories of a vibrant city.

— John Arthur Peetz

Knight, Christopher, “Flourishing on their vines,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 11, 2008, p. E19

Los Angeles Times

Four new paintings by Mary Weatherford at Sister show nearly identical tangles of grape, wisteria or another vine, close up and after most of the leaves have fallen. Rendered in muted gray, green, ocher and off-white hues, the autumnal beauty of the image melds with a fecund profusion of linear marks to carve out remarkably deep layers of space.

Weatherford paints on linen using Flashe vinyl-based colors, whose opacity seems to absorb light the way velvet does. The vines' inescapable references to Jackson Pollock's abstract skeins of poured color are risky and audacious, which makes the payoff in these small and lovely paintings that much greater.

A few blocks away at Cottage Home, seven large paintings from the last decade focus on two themes: brick walls, which repeat horizontal rows of multicolored rectangles at once vaporous and impenetrable, and actual starfish glued to the surface of canvases brushed with color. (One starry field is storm-tossed like a seascape from J.M.W. Turner, while another is like wallpaper for a child's room.)

They also allude to formidable artists such as Jasper Johns and Vincent van Gogh, yet always in a manner that is singularly inventive.

Mary Weatherford, *vines*, 2008, Flashe on linen, 37 x 44 inches.

Weatherford works in series that, judging from the dates, she apparently sets aside and returns to later -- sometimes many years later.

It's easy to see why. The modest repertoire is surprisingly compelling, like a quirky set of self-imposed limitations that demands continual reinvention. -Christopher Knight

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Sister, 955 Chung King Road, and Cottage Home, 410 Cottage Home St., Chinatown, Los Angeles, (213) 628-7000, through Saturday.

Sholis, Brian, “Mary Weatherford,” *Artforum.com*, June 19, 2006

ARTFORUM

Mary Weatherford

SHANE CAMPBELL
836 Wenonah Ave
May 13–July 01

Mary Weatherford, *apparition*, 2006

The three midsize canvases in this Los Angeles–based artist’s exhibition, each a slightly different view of the same rocky outcrop, would be of little interest were they not so well executed; instead, they argue convincingly for the value of painting directly from life. Each skillfully fuses two currently unfashionable artistic traditions: Look at them from a few feet away, and the compositions are reminiscent of the kind of by-the-sea plein air painting that Courbet and Monet practiced in Normandy circa 1870; zoom in on almost any part of a canvas, and your field of vision is filled with a harmonious, semiabstract chromatic reverie that evokes early-twentieth-century practitioners on both sides of the Atlantic, from Sonia Delaunay and Franz Marc to Georgia O’Keeffe and Joseph Stella. Rendered in flashe, a vinyl-based paint that doesn’t lose the intensity of its color when diluted with water (as Weatherford has done here), these works register changes in sunlight upon the rock formation by altering the composition’s dominant hue: *apparition*, 2006, is reddish pink; *after Hodler*, 2006, is reddish orange; *shadow*, 2005, is bluish green. These colors have been applied with diaphanous, mostly vertical, soft-edged brushstrokes, and the shimmering effect grants the hulking mass dreamlike airiness and grace.

Mahoney, Robert, "Mary Weatherford," *Time Out New York*, January 4-11, 2001, p. 46

Mary Weatherford

Debs & Co., through Sat 6 (see Chelsea).

In recent shows, painter Mary Weatherford has offered a kind of "lite" abstraction, combining washes of offbeat color with liberal sprinklings of such decorative collage elements as seashells and starfish. Such sea-life details may or may not have been immediately related to Weatherford's move last year from New York to her native coastal California, but it's obvious from this exhibition that she still combs the beaches and attaches what she finds there to canvases. She also continues to work on a larger scale (some canvases are roughly five by four feet): In *Absorbent*, for example, a bright yellow oval resides on the canvas surface with large bath sponges that stick out in a friendly and playful way.

But the real action here happens in a collection of smaller paintings--most nine by twelve inches--which Weatherford appears to have dashed off quicker than you can say "haiku." The best is *Swamp*, a small study executed in moody blue, with a suggestion of reeds dropped in by a few feathery strokes that evoke ancient Japanese painting. A close second is *Boat Race*, in which Weatherford plays Whistler by dividing a horizontal panel into two washes of muted color that instantly become sky and sea when one realizes that the tiny flecks of black paint represent boats.

Mary Weatherford, *Swamp*, 2000.

Some of the other small paintings include shells, sponges and starfish. Perhaps the best of these is *Shell Cloud*, in which Weatherford creates a sweet little mosaic of tiny pink shells to compose a "cloud" and then sets it afloat in a loosely figurative evocation of sky and sea. Finally, in *Seawall*, Weatherford lines the bottom of a small gray painting with rows of stacked-up shells. This painting in particular offers proof of Weatherford's talents: Coming as close as it does to beach-resort kitsch and cuteness, the painting nevertheless takes one's breath away by soaring into a kind of imagist poetry. In such a tour de force, Weatherford proves that the tropes of "low" seaside painting can be transformed into a fine-art aesthetic, making her paintings all the more amazing when she succeeds.

-Robert Mahoney

Schwabsky, Barry, "Mary Weatherford: Works on Paper, Thomas Korzelius Fine Art, New York," *Art on Paper*, March-April 1999, p. 64

Mary Weatherford, *Untitled*, gelatin silver print with sand dollar on paper (4-1/2x6-3/4 in.), 1998. Courtesy Thomas Korzelius Fine Art, New York.

Mary Weatherford: Works on Paper. Thomas Korzelius Fine Art, New York.

By selecting the title *Works on Paper*, Mary Weatherford presumably meant to alert us to the possibility that although these pieces could, without inaccuracy, have been designated photographs, they relate to her paintings much as other artists' drawings do to their canvases. The photographic images, she seems to suggest, parallel, in their function, the silkscreened imagery of her paintings.

The works on view at Thomas Korzelius Fine Art earlier this winter consisted of small, hand-emulsioned sheets—postcard-size or smaller—arranged mostly in horizontal sequences, though some are shown singly. Scale is of the essence here: as small as these works are, the heads of young women, most looking straight at the viewer or else straight away, which are their main imagery, are so placed and scaled as to make the sheets they inhabit seem overwhelmingly big by comparison. Before the emulsion was applied, most of the sheets had been collaged with two or three tiny sand dollars, irregular little disks looking almost like nail heads, that float around the women like stars.

The women look far away, faded, almost lost amid the painterly tonalities of the surrounding field of emulsion, which is often a moody gray, sometimes clouding over to near-black or even brown. There is a peculiarly personalist inflection of Warholian glamour about these images—as though some quite ordinary people were being cast as the artist's very own Marilyns and Jackies and were feeling self-conscious about their inability to be larger than life. And in this self-consciousness lies the works' unsettled poetry. I recognized the painter Jacqueline Humphries among the subjects, and another was pointed out to me as the artist's sister, but I doubt their identity is much to the point—it's their potential anonymity that counts here.

Weatherford's paintings have been pretty much an uneasy (and often unresolved) amalgam of Pop and Color Field—Andy Warhol meets Kenneth Noland. The difficulty they've posed has to do with understanding why such cool, impersonal methods were being put to uses that were so sentimental. But in these modest yet haunting pieces, with their discreet tactility, tenderness and cool are perfectly fused.

The exhibition was accompanied by a booklet, *Miniatures*, as subdued as the works themselves. It juxtaposes nine brief texts by Margaret Weatherford, the artist's sister, with images of sand dollars. Somewhere between short-short stories and prose poems, the texts evoke that sense of longing for anywhere-else-but-here that marks certain suburban American childhoods. "At home, we are a normal family...."

—Barry Schwabsky

Princenthal, Nancy, "Mary Weatherford at Debs & Co.," *Art in America*, July 1998, p. 92

Art in America

NEW YORK

Mary Weatherford at Debs & Co.

It's Easter in Weatherford's recent paintings, and she is celebrating with a Sunday at the beach. Almost all the works included in this show, titled "Easter," are made with flashe and tiny starfish. And almost all strike a delicate balance between picturing the seashore and the empyrean.

Space Monkey, the big canvas that greeted viewers, is particularly evocative of hot white sands and Mediterranean blue water. On the left side, broad strokes of chalky paint sketch a rough-edged beach; to the right, a flat expanse of warm blue is studded with little dried starfish, some painted to match the azure background. A few starfish seem to have been temporarily placed before the final blue was applied, leaving lighter areas beneath them—traces of process that are also a little like the glow of astral bodies in deep space.

Elsewhere, the marine motif is less explicit. In *Big Red Margaret Head*, the silhouette of a shaggy-haired woman's head doubles as a clay-red promontory jutting into a vast black sky. Here the starfish are nearly extinguished by inky paint, or camouflaged by the red of Margaret's hair. By contrast, the unpainted starfish in the much smaller painting *Plum* fairly radiate from within their wine-dark sea. The supple, linear rhythms of Miró's landscapes seem pertinent to these works, and, sometimes, as in *Heavy on Top*, the simple pleasures of Milton Avery. Here, Weatherford has a shimmery expanse of orange meet a dazzling blue sky at a gently broken horizon; a few starfish appear to have peeled off in the heat, leaving faint prints behind. On the other hand, there's not much doubt about the reference in *Eyes in the Heat*, which redoes Pollock's turbulent painting as a taut, white-hot expanse interrupted only by two symmetrically positioned snail shells. Curling into themselves with perfect inscrutability, the painted shells help sustain a poise that broadly parodies the volcanic instability of Pollock's work.

Also reliant on a dialogue between alter egos is the pair of small canvases called *Sweet Days of Summer*. In the first, a handful of tiny clamshells is scattered like flower petals on a pinkish ground beneath a cool green sea. In the second canvas, where a whiter stretch of sand borders an acid-green ocean, similar clamshells are clotted together gracelessly, their shiny pink insides suggesting a scabrous skin disease. These two *Sweet Days of Summer*s make it clear that fragility and tenderness are not always comfortable conditions.

These paintings depart markedly from Weatherford's earlier, targetlike abstractions, but as a group they play well together. Nursery decor (Saint-Exupéry comes to mind), boardwalk tchotchkes and blameless lyricism all have a role. Or, put another way, Weatherford's recent work balances nostalgic longing, critical self-awareness and—it's Easter, after all—a good measure of transcendence.

—*Nancy Princenthal*

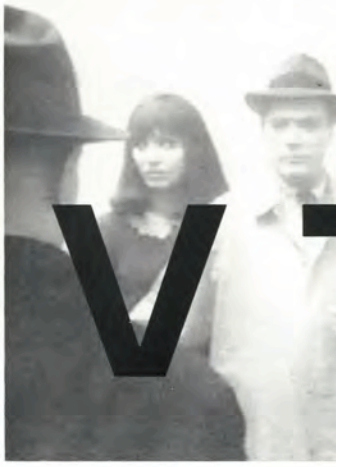
Mary Weatherford: *Space Monkey*, 1998, flashe and starfish on canvas, 60 inches square; at Debs & Co.

Rubenstein, Meyer Raphael, *Postcards from Alphaville: Jean-Luc Godard in Contemporary Art 1963-1992*, P.S. 1, New York: Institute for Contemporary Art, 1992

"I think that my originality is that I don't make any distinction between men and women. It's just like two kinds of animals. I put direction and my lines in a man's body and a man's mouth or in a woman's body and a woman's mouth without worrying that because she's a woman she can, or because he's a man he can't say it." —Jean-Luc Godard

Mary Weatherford, *Portrait of Jean-Luc Godard*, enamel on canvas, 1988

Postcards from Alphav



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Rubenstein, Meyer Raphael, *Postcards from Alphaville: Jean-Luc Godard in Contemporary Art 1963-1992*, P.S. 1, New York: Institute for Contemporary Art, 1992

Mary Weatherford *American, b.1963*

In 1988 Mary Weatherford made two paintings about Godard's films. The first, an untitled work, consists of a photosilkscreen of Godard over which Weatherford has superimposed the names of actresses that appeared in his films. The second work consists of two panels, one showing sixteen targets, the other showing the names of sixteen actresses from Godard's films. The names of the actresses (they include Brigitte Bardot, Anna Karina, Anne Wiazemsky, Jean Seberg) are written in white so that they appear and disappear depending on the angle from which one views them. The whiteness also serves to suggest a movie screen. The targets' shapes, which appear in other of Weatherford's paintings, are a type of surrogate or stand-in for portraits. Weatherford's work seems to imply a perceived discrepancy between Godard's radical aesthetics and the conventional gender roles his films often appear to reinforce.

Jean-Luc Godard in Contemporary Art
1963–1992
Curated by Meyer Raphael Rubenstein

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The Institute for Contemporary Art

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Affaires Étrangères

Zinsser, John, “Geometry and its Discontents,” *Tema Celeste*, Autumn 1991, No. 32-33, pp. 72-76

Geometry and its *D*iscontents

by JOHN ZINSSER

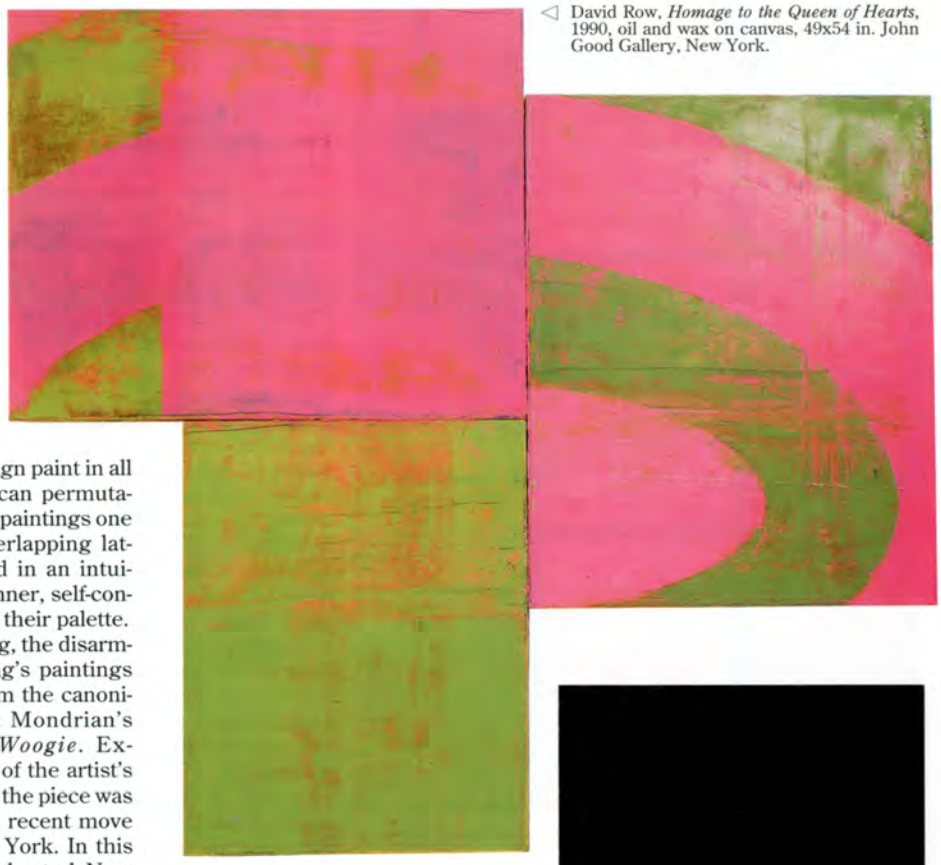
Mary Weatherford, *Nagasaki (Madama Butterfly)*, 1989, oil on canvas, 82x82 in. Galerie Marc Jancou, Zurich.

The pluralism represented by this new generation of artists is certainly refreshing, escaping any moniker as convenient as the “neo-Geo” tag that critics bestowed upon their 1980s predecessors. As we slip from the last decade to this one, what is emerging is a growing sense of primacy, as expressed through an increased attention paid to material concerns as well as to the emotional drive behind the work.

Since the origins of nonobjective Cubism, Futurism and Constructivism in Europe, abstract painters have employed geometric structuring in their work as a means of locating its relationship to the surrounding culture. With post-War American abstraction this sensibility became especially acute. One cannot view a Kenneth Noland flatly stained chevron painting of the early 1960s, for example, without seeing in it the expansionist optimism that charged the air during John Kennedy's presidency. How, then, are we to respond to the varied ways in which contemporary American artists are now addressing painting issues through the predetermined language of geometric abstraction? The text that follows looks at eight representatives of this movement. All approach their work not in terms of appropriation or nostalgia, but with a spirit that responds to the current cultural climate.

Gary Lang's freehand grids and targets are surprisingly painterly, loaded with color and exuberant energy. In the square format, Lang's work initially resembles overdetermined

Zinsser, John, “Geometry and its Discontents,” *Tema Celeste*, Autumn 1991, No. 32-33, pp. 72-76



◁ David Row, *Homage to the Queen of Hearts*, 1990, oil and wax on canvas, 49x54 in. John Good Gallery, New York.

madras plaid. In tondo, it looks more like a tortuous test for color-blindness. But neither of these descriptions does justice to the personal and emotive qualities that Lang's paintings contain, or to the ominously disturbing presence these works assert as their self-canceling color schemes are viewed over time.

Using commercial sign paint in all its straight-from-the-can permutations, Lang builds his paintings one stripe at a time. Overlapping lattices are constructed in an intuitively methodical manner, self-consciously "cheerful" in their palette.

In immediate reading, the disarming simplicity of Lang's paintings seems to take off from the canonical example of Piet Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie*. Executed near the end of the artist's life in the early 1940s, the piece was informed by his then recent move from Europe to New York. In this work Mondrian celebrated New York as a Jazz-age matrix of color, shape and sound. Likewise, Lang's overactive paintings herald the animated liveliness of the modern cityscape, serving as metaphorical signage for the shared metropolitan experience.

Representing a more coolly calculated approach are Michael Scott's neo-Op Art stripe paintings. Executed mechanistically, Scott's works consist of hard-edged vertical pinstripe black bands applied onto primed mat white honeycomb aluminum grounds. The way in which the paintings are physically made is in no way manifestly apparent. As such, the gestural presence of the maker is coldly distanced from the viewer.

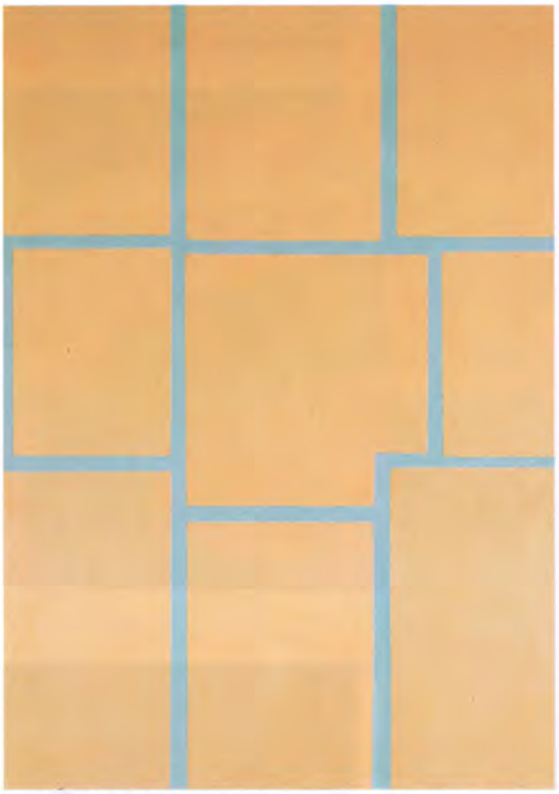
Further alienation is induced by the actual viewing experience: the paintings are so manically hyperoptic that they are literally difficult to look at. Faced with one such painting, this viewer found himself seeing a pulsating moire pattern at the center of his field of vision and rushes of prismatic color at its peripheries. While Scott's work may be plotted in a rigorously formal manner, in its viewing it becomes wildly active, even psychoactive.

A pat response to this work would be that — like the mid-1980s work of Ross Bleckner and Philip Taaffe — Scott is appropriating a motif from Op Art as a way of ironically resuscitating a "dead" art historical movement. It's true, no doubt, that the configurations and execution of Scott's paintings borrows heavily from the tropes of the original Op movement, those of pattern painters of the 1960s such as Bridget Riley and Victor Vasarely. Yet that's a little too easy. Scott's work has a valid primacy of its own, troublingly effective in its severe emotional detachment.

Mary Heilmann, the oldest of the artists being discussed here, brings an unexpected youthful playfulness

Richmond Burton, *One*, 1990, oil on linen, 104x48 in. Matthew Marks Inc., New York.

Zinsser, John, “Geometry and its Discontents,” *Tema Celeste*, Autumn 1991, No. 32-33, pp. 72-76



Stephen Westfall, *Mirage*, 1988, oil on canvas, 60x42 in. Daniel Newburg Gallery, New York.

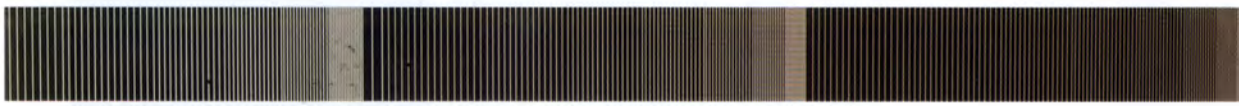
to her work. Over the last few years she has concerned herself with the manner in which geometry can be rendered gesturally, humanistically. Heilmann builds up her canvases in thin washes of primary colors, always keeping her iconographic terms to the absolute minimum. In fact, her final compositions are often arrived at through a negation of what's underneath. Her imagery — evoking readings of: squares floating on fields; irregular flagstones; climbing helixes; or flags of yet-undiscovered nations — is often defined by a single milky sheet of paint. This methodology may at first appear disarmingly simple, but it gets its real charge by playing off the already established minimalist strategies of artists such as Brice Marden and Niele Toroni.

In her recent show at New York's Pat Hearn Gallery, Heilmann used the installation to openly attack the prevalent attitude of painting-as-rarefied-object. The gallery, known for its sparse installations, was used instead as a container for a freely hung show that accommodated a large number of works in all shapes and sizes. Viewers did not know whether to look at the works individually or collectively. And the paintings, although consistent with one another in conception and execution, displayed a daringly eclectic set of pictorial ideas. Many employed tricky formats, shaped canvases which served not only to determine the geometric schema within but made explicit the role of the stretcher bars and canvas as a physical support structure. Throughout, Heilmann displayed gestural freedom without ever losing a tightness of purpose.

In her work Mary Weatherford, more than Heilmann, is openly concerned with questioning pre-existing cultural notions of beauty and gender in relation to the painting-making activity. Weatherford makes medium- to large-scale square-format works in which a photosilkscreened image is incised with a centered target motif. Often a stereotypically “feminine” photographic image is superimposed by silkscreen on top of a decisively “masculine” hard-edged geometric target. This double entendre gives the work an edgy quality that belies its initial readings of beauty and elegance.

In a recent series shown at the Marc Jancou Gallerie in Zurich, Weatherford adopted the opera *Swan Lake* as her subject. She had a photographer take a picture of swan feathers seemingly floating through space. This image was enlarged into a silkscreen the size of the canvas and used as a common leitmotif between the paintings. In each, a differing degree of hard-edged geometry would show through the image. Weatherford chose colors in the silver and black range to further the graphic reading of the work and to play off the photographic nature of the painting's source. In all, the imagery remains tautly flat, like a once-removed Greenbergian allover field.

The choice of the target motif is certainly an art historically loaded one, invoking comparisons to Jasper Johns and Kenneth Noland. While Weatherford's serial usage of silkscreened photograph as a painterly device recalls Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg. Yet, in distinction from the highly-visible group of 1980s painters that preceded her (Sherrie Levine, Mike Bidlo, Julie Wachtel, et al.), Weatherford cites her historical sources gently, in a manner that is not openly appropriative. Weatherford's reading of art history-as-text is an intentionally skewed misreading, calling into doubt the power-structures that those images so readily recall.



Michael Scott, *Untitled #23*, 1990, enamel on aluminum, 15½x192 in. Tony Shafrazi Gallery, New York.

Zinsser, John, “Geometry and its Discontents,” *Tema Celeste*, Autumn 1991, No. 32-33, pp. 72-76

Mary Heilmann, *Red Cracky*, 1991, oil on canvas, 60x42 in. Pat Hearn Gallery, New York.

David Dupuis, Untitled, 1991, paper and flashe on canvas, 72x60 in. Clarissa Dalrymple, New York.

Richmond Burton is more concerned with the literalization of metaphor. His “thought plane” series is an overt investigation into the mechanics of painting-making. These works treat their own physical working methodology as directly analogous to the painter’s thought process. The wooden support structures for these single- and multipanel pieces serve as a rigid architecture, from which the final configuration is determined. Striped bands of black paint are described by swings of a compass from focal points located either at the image’s center, or at its perimeters. The wooden blocks from which the compass turns are made are left attached, the final works presenting themselves as self-determining machines. The resulting stripes are the width of a single wide brush separated by thin areas of raw canvas — a structure that draws immediate comparison to Frank Stella’s black paintings of the late 1950s.

But where Stella employed this device as a kind of dead-end self-describing tautology, in Burton’s case the format relates more directly to the body-specific aspect of the painting activity, the compass arcs serving as mimetic surrogates for the proportional reach of a painter’s arm: they are mappings of the physical process through which all abstract paintings are made.

As with Burton’s imagery, David Dupuis’ mazelike constructions foremost describe the process of their own making. Using gel painting medium, Dupuis attaches thin strips of paper directly to the canvas’ surface, achieving a tactile bas-relief effect. The resulting configurations — like a vulnerably human form of die casting — range in mood from freely antic to oppressively claustrophobic. The paper and canvas surface is then further activated by Dupuis’ use of flashe paint, a mat waterbase paint that is brushed on or fingerpainted in successive translucent layers. A distinctive pure white surface light results, variable and seemingly undulating.

Like Jasper Johns’ use of encaustic, for Dupuis this methodology allows a way of achieving painterly results while preserving the material integrity of the work’s own making. Like Philip Taaffe’s mid-1980s collage usage of Op-inspired geometry, Dupuis employs paper as a hard-edged template against which he counterpoises a more painterly touch: rationality pitted against the ineffable forces of human emotion.

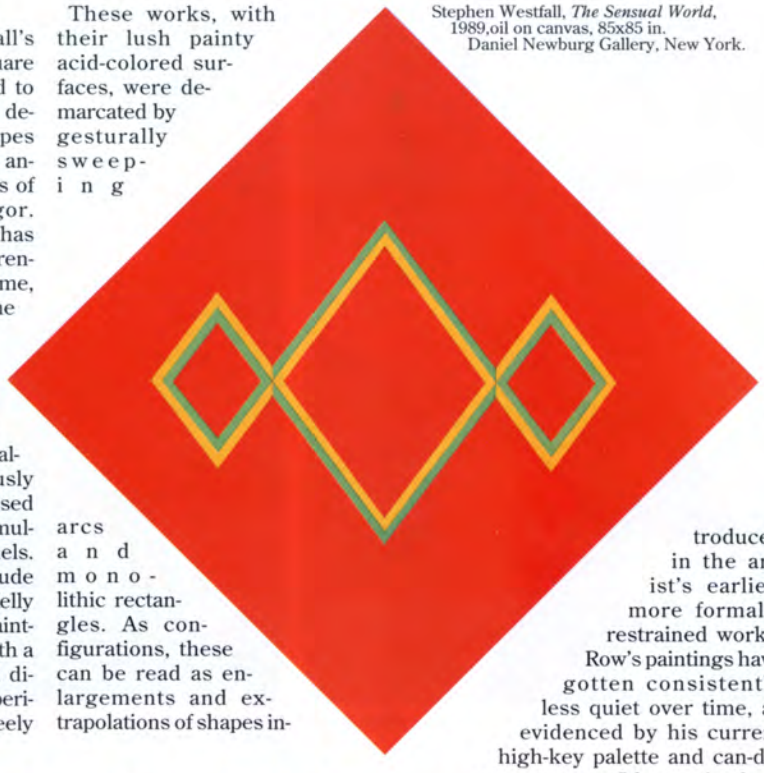
Stephen Westfall’s flat grid constructions and neo-Suprematist diamond configurations also reveal a quiet pathos, their imagery resting with discomfiture upon the achievements of Modernism. Painted in toned-down variants of primary colors, his characteristic grid paintings never quite line up straight, as if they have slipped from a perfect Platonic condition to one that accepts the doubts and failures of the modernist program. Like the writing of Samuel Beckett, they capture a sense of hopelessness through an austerity of terms. These paintings are not cynical or ironical; they are lovingly painted in thin layers, the hard-edged geometry not achieved with masking tape but by a hand that shows meticu-

Zinsser, John, “Geometry and its Discontents,” *Tema Celeste*, Autumn 1991, No. 32-33, pp. 72-76

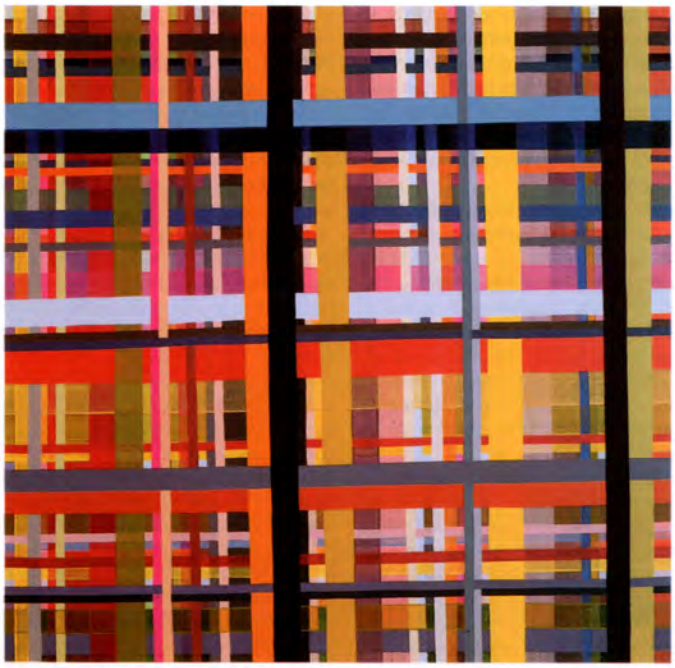
lous and halting self-restraint.

More free-spirited are Westfall's diamond series, in which the square canvas is literally turned on end to become a diamond. This format determined, the free-floating shapes contained seem to spin off one another, let loose from the confines of conventional rectilinear rigor. Throughout his work, Westfall has determined a hermetic self-referential language that, viewed over time, asserts a self-negating logic prone to visual pun. As with Westfall, David Row's work plays off a viewer's pre-established expectations of what a geometric painting should "look like." His recent show at John Good Gallery in New York was ambitiously conceived and executed, comprised of large-scale works made up of multiple intersecting rectangular panels. Here Row's work shared an attitude with his antecedents Ellsworth Kelly and Frank Stella: that abstract paintings can operate at a scale and with a visual impact that relates them directly to the popular culture experience. As such, they transgress freely from rarefied tradition.

These works, with their lush painty acid-colored surfaces, were demarcated by gesturally sweeping arcs and monolithic rectangles. As configurations, these can be read as enlargements and extrapolations of shapes introduced in the artist's earlier, more formally restrained works. Row's paintings have gotten consistently less quiet over time, as evidenced by his current high-key palette and can-do-no-wrong confident paint handling. For Row, sheer conviction has subsumed the role of content, the paintings asserting themselves most strongly through their heightened physicality.



Stephen Westfall, *The Sensual World*, 1989,oil on canvas, 85x85 in. Daniel Newburg Gallery, New York.



Gary Lang, *Perforated and Awareness*, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 48x48 in. Michael Klein Inc., New York.

The pluralism represented by this new generation of artists is certainly refreshing, escaping any moniker as convenient as the "neo-Geo" tag that critics bestowed upon their 1980s predecessors. This new crop is clearly more free-associational in its use of art historical quotation, openly borrowing without getting hung up on the notion of the past record as a sacred text.

As we slip from the last decade to this one, what is emerging is a growing sense of primacy, as expressed through an increased attention paid to material concerns as well as to the emotional drive behind the work. As the decade progresses, perhaps a sense of shared ideology will more clearly coalesce. It's an exciting possibility.

John Zinsser is a New York-based painter and writer. □

Hunter, Sam, *Emerging Art 1990*, Trenton: New Jersey State Art Museum, 1990

EMERGING ART 1990

by Sam Hunter

In making the selection of emerging art over this past year for the second Commodities Corporation collection, after a ten-year hiatus, I quickly became aware of significant changes that had overtaken the creation and discourse of art in the intervening decade. Two significant shifts in artistic perspective since 1980 involve, on the one hand, an increasing politicization of art, especially as regards criteria of quality, and, almost contrarily, it would seem, a much greater emphasis on intellectually demanding post-modernist theory. Purely esthetic issues, previously defined by such concepts as formalism and sundry other related notions, have generally taken a back seat to new strategies of "appropriation," deconstruction and to emotionally charged social issues. The latter include an urgent feminist agenda and questions of the dominance of artistic and social criteria by white male Western culture.

Nonetheless, I am happy to report that there has been little or no fall-off in artistic quality from the seventies to the eighties and early nineties. Of course, we have no way yet of knowing if today's artists of promise will achieve, ten years from now, an eminence and celebrity comparable with the distinction of some of the notables of the first selection, among these, Alice Aycock, John Baldessari, Jonathan Borofsky, Scott Burton, Robert Longo, Sean Scully and William Wegman.

Curiously, even among artists who still adhere to a strong formalist program, social content plays a defining role, expressed mainly in a subtext of provocative titles and conceptual schema, rather than in explicit, socially loaded representational forms. Mary Weatherford is one of a number of gifted young artists who manages to tread most deftly the precarious line between polemic and formalist requirements, without descending into propoganda. Ironically enough, her paintings turn the target motifs made popular in the sixties by such dominant male artists as Jasper Johns and Kenneth Noland against themselves, to serve feminist ends.

Since graduating from Princeton five years ago, she has been painting simple targets in varied scale, from intimate to monumental, and in highly personal, but objectively pleasurable color combinations. She also created a series of more complicated targets, where the faintly discernible bull's-eye is thinly overpainted with delicately rendered floral bouquets of peonies, thus contrasting a male, military system of order with organic softness and associations of femininity. To these inventions she applies such surprising titles as *Camille*, *Cho-Cho-San* and *Manon Lescaut*. Perhaps quixotically she perceives her rather rigorous color forms as emotional statements and "diagrams of personal histories," recalling the fate of heroic and abused woman of fact and fiction.

The literary associations of Ms. Weatherford's repeated images support and amplify the formal essence of her art. These abstract devices, visual and literary, repeatedly "target" the tragic heroines so often depicted in film, opera and literature as the focus of their submerged content. Weatherford has referred to her themes in an explanatory commentary on her titles as "archetypal histories of good/bad women," and as symbols of an anti-feminist prejudice. In *Nagasaki* she rather grimly mixes a geographic locale from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* with the Japanese site of the atom bomb explosion.

Mary Weatherford, *Nagasaki* 1989

Sam Hunter, *New Directions*, New York: S. Bitter Larkin Gallery, 1990

NEW DIRECTIONS

Mary Weatherford has for three years been painting simple targets in highly personal but objectively pleasurable color combinations, and she also makes targets overpainted with delicately rendered floral bouquets. To both of these inventions she applies such surprising titles as *Camille*, and *Manon Lescaut*. Perhaps quixotically she perceives her rather rigorous color structures, which often recall the purist targets of Kenneth Noland and Jasper Johns's early constructions, as "diagrams of personal histories." The literary associations of her repeated images support and amplify the formal essence of her art. These abstract constructs, visual and literary, constantly "target" the tragic heroines so often depicted in film, opera and literature as the focus of their submerged content. Weatherford has referred to these themes in an explanatory commentary of her titles as "archetypal histories of good/bad women," and anti-feminist prejudice she wishes to expunge, or at least to confront explicitly in her highly formalized art with its anomalous but suggestive titles.

Ms. Weatherford arrived at her obsessive and rivetting target motif in 1986 at the Whitney Museum of American Art as a fellow in the Independent Study Program. Shortly thereafter she discovered the nineteenth-century nature photography of Karl Blossfeldt, in whose starkly isolated plant and floral imagery the European Surrealists had later taken a lively interest. Modernist form and a viable deconstructive critique for unmasking anti-feminist codes of representation first came together in a moment of epiphany during a viewing of Hitchcock's film, *Vertigo*. She recalls: "In the film Jimmy Stewart and Kim Novack are walking in a forest. This is a woman pretending to be reincarnated, pretending to be another woman. She walks up to one of the trees and says, 'I was born here and I died there.' I felt it was the perfect place in the film, where time and place become one ... I had found a model for a time line. Then I remembered those Natural History museums of my childhood where you see a slab of a tree with the dates marked off on its rings, and there I found a great physical metaphor for the passage of time and how things evolve. Then I began thinking in political terms, how things in the world change little by little: You start here and you end up there, and you're not quite sure how it happened but somehow as a woman you've been cheated of your rights. So my paintings started out being historical time lines, and then I wondered why they couldn't go a step further and become personal histories."

As the target motif evolved, and with it her pictorial experience, Ms. Weatherford's colors grew more sensuously responsive, seductive and symbolically attuned. Their chromatic lusciousness and her use of a single, centered image draws the viewer's eye to the center of the painting. By utilizing target images, inevitably associated with the masculine art of Johns and Noland, and by working on an increasingly heroic scale defined by their generation, she refers inevitably to an American macho tradition. She also manipulates conventional male/female symbols in a personal manner: the target refers at once to a traditional male preoccupation with shooting, but it also underscores women's role as the target of the male fantasy, that strange and threatening "other" which he must reduce to a relatively powerless status. The target is also formed of concentric circles (a traditionally female sign, as are her repeated use of blood-red colors). An increasing ease and mastery in large scale form recently combine with vibrant color interaction and nuanced surface to subvert even her most didactic intentions, however. Today her art clearly sustains her declared aim to "make political art that can be beautiful."

- Sam Hunter

MARY WEATHERFORD
LA TRAVIATA (VIOLETTA) 1989. Oil on canvas; diptych, each 60 x 60"

Smith, Roberta, "Fresh, Hot and Headed for Fame," *The New York Times*, January 5, 1990

The New York Times

Fresh, Hot and Headed for Fame

The New York Times/
William E. Sauro

ART

Mary Weatherford, whose boldly scaled targets and silk-screened images of peonies may be seen at the Diane Brown Gallery.

A few blocks east at the Diane Brown Gallery (560 Broadway, at Prince Street), **MARY WEATHERFORD**, a New York City artist, is showing paintings (through Jan. 27) that turn the motifs made popular by Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol toward feminist ends. The images deployed are boldly scaled targets or silk-screened images of peonies with ghosts of targets lurking among their papery petals. The contrast of military order and organic softness, of masculine and feminine, is substantiated by the paintings' titles, which are borrowed from a well-known tale of exploitation, Puccini's "Madama Butterfly." The paintings are variously named after the opera's heroine, her child and Nagasaki, the port where the opera takes place.

Ms. Weatherford's titles and the tragedy they evoke don't take her art as far beyond Johns and Warhol as they need to go, but her sense of coor, especially in the two largest target paintings, is unusual and promising. Moreover, her determination to turn abstract painting into a crossover art form, infusing it with both feminist consciousness and references to the performing arts that are fraught with feminine stereotypes, is full of possibilities.