

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

ART SPIEL

Reflections on the work of contemporary artists

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Arden Bendler Browning at Bridgette Mayer Gallery

Featured Artist



Image from the opening reception of *Wayfinding* at Bridgette Mayer Gallery, photo courtesy of the artist

Wayfinding, Arden Bendler Browning's solo exhibition at Bridgette Mayer Gallery in Philadelphia, follows the artist's recent completion of a major public art project, Elastic Geography, a 25 by 140 foot mural on the side of Yards Brewery, commissioned by Mural Arts Philadelphia. The show includes 21 new paintings, a Vault installation of over 50 mixed media works on panel, and a custom interactive virtual reality. It runs through October 22nd.

Tell us more about the body of work in *Wayfinding*.

Wayfinding is a collection of works made primarily during the pandemic winters. All of the works stemmed from a search for expansion and imagination when the world felt disturbingly static and closed.

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When travel became limited in 2020, my studio practice shifted towards a search for safety and marvel within spaces connected to my daily routes. The spaces that continue to beckon me repeatedly are the understories of familiar sidewalk trees throughout changes in seasons, time of day, weather, and my own moods.

I look at my surroundings and make marks to orient myself. Through drawing, smartphone photography and videography, I take notes and bring the outside inside my studio walls. Photographs of my paintings carry my work into a virtual space, and allow for dramatic expansion of scale.

I create complex, disorienting spaces where I intentionally become lost and then find my way back out through gesture, color, and depth. Working both in physical and virtual paint, and panels versus infinite digital space, I develop playful shifts in scale, containment, compression and expansiveness. Creating these arduous treks through paint reshapes the monotony of the everyday into unfamiliar adventure. It is the same thrill I experience when taking in the infinite detail of the natural world or the urban environment, or exploring the mystery of new terrain.



Arden Bendler Browning, *New Year's hike with friends at Heinz (from video of swampy trash), with video slideshow from quarantine city nature walks, 2021*, fluid acrylic, acrylic gouache, acrylic spray paint, video monitor, and computer playing programmed slideshow of phone snapshots slowly fading into and briefly superimposing on subsequent snapshots, 30×30 inches; monitor : 4×6 inches, photo courtesy of Karen Mauch

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Arden Bandler Browning, *Distillery Pine (video with breeze) over VR Escape Routes (from video captures)*, 2022, fluid acrylic, acrylic ink, acrylic gouache, acrylic spray paint on shaped wood panel, 60×60 inches, photo courtesy of Karen Mauch

You work across media. What would you like to share about your process?

I take photographs, make little paintings, and record videos of moments and movements. I make large paintings while looking at the small paintings, while watching looped videos, and while studying the different perspectives recorded by the compacted detail of smartphone snapshots.

I also make virtual reality 3D paintings stemming from photographs of my drawings and paintings. Then, I make new paintings while watching video documentation of the VR paintings. These new paintings are more abstract, yet still descriptive of an observed space. Each step in my creative process offers a new perspective and unexplored paths.

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

In my virtual reality piece “Pathfinding”, people can walk through larger than life size three-dimensional paintings based on selected paintings hanging in the exhibition. Each scene begins as a flattened image on the floor and gradually expands upward like a pop-up book around the viewer.

When a painting is on its way to becoming resolved but not quite settled, I am so absorbed that I am not thinking about my surroundings or next steps, yet I am actively finding my way out. I want to offer other people a way to be so immersed that they can wander and imagine, but can also feel encouraged to explore and meander without a directive to solve or comprehend.



Arden Bendler Browning, still from video capture of *Pathfinding*, 2022, custom virtual reality application, photo courtesy of the artist. Videos can be seen on the artist's [instagram](#)

Arden Bendler Browning at Bridgette Mayer Gallery 709 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA September 6 to October 22, 2022

Philadelphia based artist Arden Bendler Browning makes paintings, works on paper, public art and interactive virtual reality (VR) environments connected to painting. Her work is represented by Bridgette Mayer Gallery in Philadelphia, Galleri Urbane in Dallas, and Tinney Contemporary in Nashville. Her works are included in the West Collection, the Philadelphia International Airport, Dream Hotel Nashville, Frost Tower Collection, Toyota, and more. Selected exhibitions include the American University Museum, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Michener Art Museum, Weatherspoon Museum, and Delaware Contemporary. Her work has been written about in Hyperallergic, New American Paintings, I Like Your Work podcast,

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The Washington Post, The Philadelphia Inquirer, Bmore Art and more. She recently completed artist residencies at Interlude in Livingston, NY, and Pouch Cove Foundation in Newfoundland, Canada. Arden earned a BFA from Carnegie Mellon University, a Masters in Studio Art from Sydney College of the Arts, and an MFA from Tyler School of Art.