

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

Sight-reading

Arden Bendler Browning

Galleri Urbane

November 23 - December 28, 2019

Opening Reception: Saturday, November 23, 5:30-8:00pm.

Returning for her second solo exhibition in Dallas, Arden Bendler Browning presents a series of exciting developments in Sight-reading. The Philadelphia-based artist has become recognized for her large scale abstractions that compress multiple ephemeral experiences into a single instance. The body of work in this exhibition takes these efforts to a new level, implementing immersive virtual reality environments that bring Bendler Browning's interests into the digital realm. This VR experience, alongside new works on paper and large-scale shaped paintings, translates the artist's ever-present desire to observe, experience, and absorb new sensory information.

Expansive family road trips provide the raw source material for Bendler Browning's artistic practice. The passenger seat of a vehicle becomes her studio, transposing the passing terrain into a series of lapsized watercolors. Upon returning home, these works on paper are inserted into room-size virtual spaces and used as the groundwork for all-surrounding digital landscapes. Sight-reading provides the chance for viewers to enter these virtual spaces for the first time ever. Using a VR headset, one can navigate these imaginary places and traverse through the surrounding three-dimensional brushstrokes. These marks mimic those found in the watercolors that now serve as backgrounds, skies, and floors. Each virtual painting can be explored from countless perspectives, offering viewers their own unique participatory encounter.

Alongside this experience, the artist offers a series of circular paintings on panel that have been made as a response to her forays into the digital. At eight feet in diameter, the largest works simulate the all-encompassing nature of their VR counterparts. The sheer scale of these paintings, coupled with their energetic swaths of layered color, evokes the notion of a portal in which one could enter. Smaller works retain this perception, most notably through an expertly painted sense of perspective. Despite a perceived frenzy of brushstrokes, Bender Browning retains control of her compositions through painting sections that both extend out and recede in and through varying cadences of mark making. The overall effect is one that transforms her VR creation into fixed moments that nonetheless preserve the digital version's dynamic animation.

The artist's drive to observe and record momentary gestures is reflected in contemporary society's desire to be plugged in. Digital networks provide an over-awareness of information, vast social connections, and no shortage of content to catch up on. Arden Bendler Browning's work captures this frenetic energy, transporting visitors into uncanny spaces that are at once strikingly familiar and unknown.