

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

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Arden Bandler Browning



Arden Bandler Browning has cultivated a dualistic practice: between acrylic and virtual reality (VR) paintings; natural and artificial inspiration; tactile and intangible processes. Bandler Browning does not walk the line between these opposing dyads, rather she continually crosses it. By oscillating between VR and painting on panel, she investigates how these two languages expand, propagate, and eclipse one another. Whether sprayed, rolled,

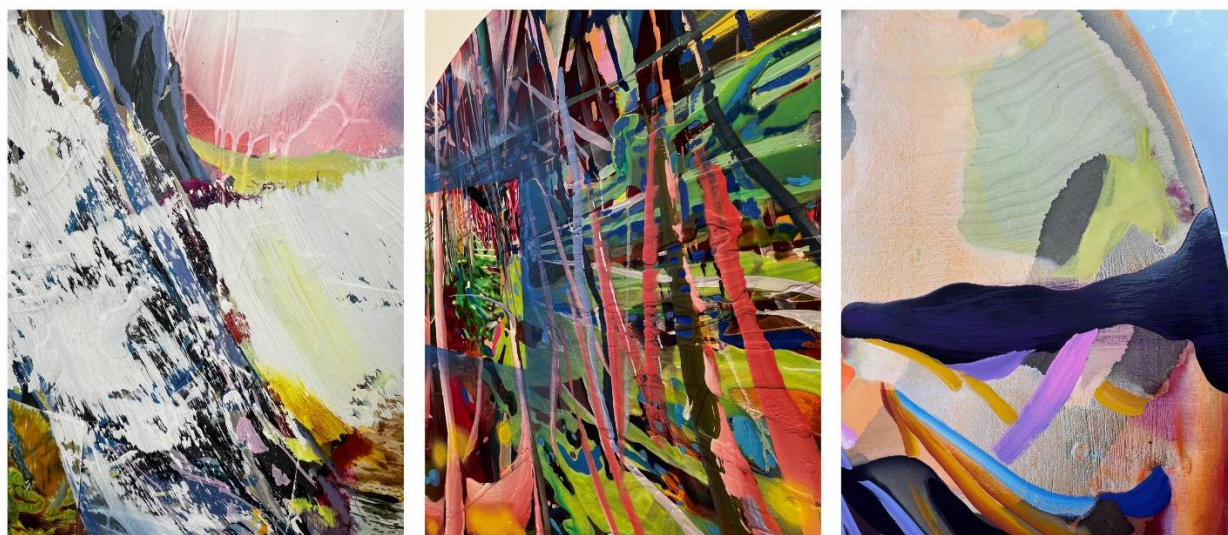
poured, brushed, pressed, or digitally painted, these marks make up the vocabulary for Bandler Browning's distinct visual language. Employing techniques of automatism, vibrant painterly application, and VR technology, the artist maintains a tenuous balance between

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landscape and abstraction. In both the artificial and physical realm, the works evoke a sense of place and incite an urge to move through the composition, to peer around its non-representational marks, and to dwell within its parameters.

Perpetually responding to her surroundings through sketches, watercolors, and photography, Arden captures small moments, fragmented shapes, or obscure color relationships in nature. Traveling to places such as Newfoundland and Alaska, she accumulates stacks of drawings from road trips or residencies, and plants them in a virtual reality. Uploading a solitary sketch to start, she scales it up as a towering background or aesthetic base, using it as a seed for infinite growth. Propagating a new environment from which she can respond, Arden enters into her own VR drawing, color matches, and pulls digital marks beyond the surface and edges of the original. Through the process of digital painting, Arden obscures the original drawing and creates an abstract environment.



When I visited Arden's studio, I had the privilege of viewing one of her VR pieces. Nothing could have prepared me for what I experienced when I put on the headset. I was suddenly transported to a place of abstraction filled with five scenes, each correlating to one of Arden's paintings. On the edges of the VR's floor, ripples lit up

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when I walked toward them, triggering a painting to emerge like a pop-up book, where massive digital brushstrokes grew up and towered over me. I moved through them—some big and volumetric, others very flat, creating an artificial space that elicited my curiosity. An array of shadows in the VR gave it a phantasmic dimensionality, while my own hand appeared as a black gridded form, it cast shadows on the composition along with the digital painting marks. When I removed the headset, I saw Arden's paintings in a new way—as a place to explore.

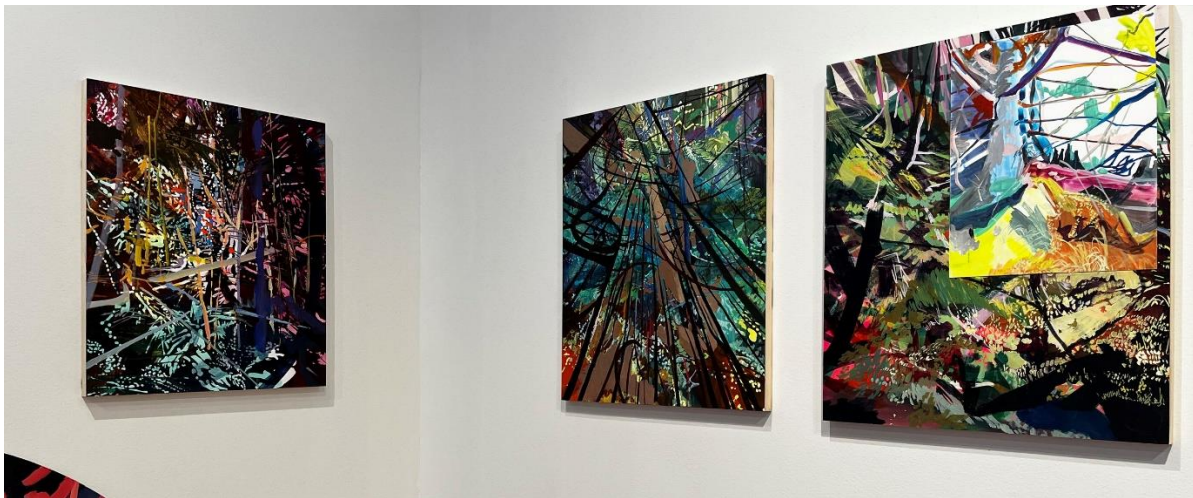


Forging a relationship between the physical and virtual, Bendler Browning brings the spatial thinking of the VR back into her acrylic paintings. Engaging her tactile sensibilities and pluralistic language of marks, the artist follows her curiosity for materials and colors, translating her virtual experience into tangible pieces. Collaging her drawings from nature directly into the surface, Arden mimics her VR beginnings by designating a singular drawing—a fragment of her memory—as a catalyst for generative growth. Staying true to the germination of a seed, Arden often obliterates the genesis drawing for the sake of the entire composition, which holds remnants of her memories that are unknowable to the viewer.

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"It's a good challenge but an interesting mash up," says Arden, "This is the way we're connecting with the world right now." The digital world is ever accessible and seemingly unlimited in content, but it's not in real time, or accurate in color; its scale is shrunken down and flattened, rather than the all-encompassing multi-sensory experience of real-life perception. Arden Bendler Browning conveys the real *through* the unreal, but also examines how we can bring the virtual realm of data into the organic and tactile. How can these two disparate worlds—consisting of their own materials, tools, and techniques—enlighten the language of the other? Moreover, how can the digital world expand our imagination in a way that paintings cannot, and how can paintings ground us in our humanity in a way that the digital world cannot?

To learn more about Arden's work, visit ArdenBendlerBrowning.com or follow her on Instagram at @arden2bees.



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