

PARALLELS

Women of Abstract Expressionism // 2022 Residency Exhibition



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December 2-18, 2022
Saturdays & Sundays 12-5pm, or by appointment
through December
Opening reception Friday, December 2, 6-10pm

Bell Projects, and co-curator Emily Roan, present – ***Parallels: Women of Abstract Expressionism*** – the 2022 Residency and culminating exhibition featuring Angela Craven, Kristina Davies, Mila Garcia, Ariana Hoch, Madeline Job, Precious Kofi, Gwen Marie, Christine Nguyen, Sara Noel, and Emily Roan. This exhibition opens **Friday, December 2nd** and runs through **December 18th, 2022**, with appointments available through the end of December. Please join us for an **opening reception on Friday, December 2nd from 6-10pm**.

“A painting to me is primarily a verb, not a noun, an event first and only secondarily an image.” – Elaine de Kooning

“There are no rules. That is how art is born, how breakthroughs happen. Go against the rules or ignore the rules. That is what invention is about.” – Helen Frankenthaler

“I'd rather risk an ugly surprise than rely on things I know I can do.” – Helen Frankenthaler

“I like a canvas to breathe and be alive. Be alive is the point. And, as the limitations are something called pigment and canvas, let's see if I can do it.” – Lee Krasner

Each of the artists in ***Parallels*** embody these amazing trail blazers' notions of what it means for them to paint. The variety of expression and mark making comes through with each artist's individual style distinctly separating them from each other, yet binding them together at the same time through similar explorations in expression and abstracted interpretation. Color, material, gesture, movement, scale, composition, and form set the tone for each of these paintings spanning a range of styles and affects from works on a more representational side to pure abstractions, and everything in between. Though created separately, each artists made their canvas concurrently during the same 6 months between May and November of this year. Separate and distinct, but together – parallels.

This group exhibition was born as an homage to the pioneering Women of Abstract Expressionism; Lee Krasner, Helen Frankenthaler, Grace Hartigan, Elaine De Kooning, Betty Blayton, Joan Mitchell, and many more.

These women gave a voice not only to abstraction as a relevant collective language, but also gave a voice to female artists who were oftentimes overshadowed by their partners or male colleagues. Community was essential to their practice, as was experimenting with color and abstracted forms to reference more subtle realms of the psyche.

The intention of this residency, and culminating exhibition, is to create a space where female artists can experiment with their own unique abstractions without the stigmas of certain eras, social structures, or hierarchies that have historically eclipsed female artists. It is a reference to the intrinsic value of abstraction as a language; a language that merges the subjective and objective lenses of culture and individuality; intuition, and symbolism.

Artists created their paintings from May to November 2022 with provided raw canvases. The only parameter given to each artist was the resulting size of the finished paintings, all other components and decisions were left to each individual artist. Experimentation, exploration, risk-taking, and pushing the boundaries of their normal practices were all outcomes from the residency. Many artists felt freer to create something out of the ordinary or to try something new with their works. Viewers are asked to examine their own visual language or associations with abstraction, and to see the vast capabilities and range that emerge within the genre. Where each of these paintings diverge in style, there are also parallels that emerge, binding them all together and creating a place at the table for each of these artists and many others before, and after, them.

Angela Craven is an artist based in Denver, Colorado. She studied in Siena, Italy, with painter and video artist Franca Marini and holds a BFA in Painting from Colorado State University. She is a grant recipient from RedLine Contemporary Art Center, The Arvada Arts & Culture Commission, 40 West Arts, and RiNo Art District. Her works have been exhibited in Colorado, New York, and Italy in solo and group shows, including the McNichols Civic Center Building in Denver, the Denver Art Museum as a demo artist, Manhattan Arts International, and Istituto d'Arte di Siena.

My painting process begins with writing - excerpts from books, songs, poetry, my own notes on small scraps of paper, or parts of conversations. I use various materials such as pastry bags and found objects to write and create a foundation for each piece. As I build layers of text, I also respond to the text intuitively with sprawling strokes of color, line, and repeating forms, layering more writing as I go. I will look at the words as a whole composition and am in constant dialogue with the painting, working to stay present with what emerges. Sometimes conversations get lost, are unreadable, or can overlap. Over the past few months, my collected writings have focused on the topic of growth, including the only legible words in this painting, "the roots are silently at work," from Howard Thurman's writing. He wrote about the "growing edge," as when we can push just beyond sheer discomfort, we gain access to something brighter, more hopeful, and more fulfilling than we imagined.

Kristina Davies (b. Denver, CO) is a visual artist and educator who believes that the act of painting is a form of self-discovery. Her art is both non-representational and figurative. She paints in her studio in the Art District on Santa Fe in Denver.

Kristina Davies is a process-based visual artist who believes that the act of painting is a form of self-discovery, of tapping into the mindful presence of openness and awe. The interaction with materials, music, movement, and mark making, all come together in a gestural, intuitive dance. She works without an attachment to a plan or goal, which allows her to experiment, take risks, and make the unconscious conscious. At times, her work is non-objective, where her visual vocabulary is pure abstraction. Often, her paintings become figurative, and a narrative unfolds, or a concept comes through in a powerful, unexpected way. Each layer, each brush stroke, each deconstruction, each mark...they all work together to create something new. This most recent painting, "The Is Not What She Had Planned," was a new exploration for Kristina. She used spray paint to create her initial mark making, and then alternated between layers of spray paint and acrylic, responding to each layer of marks. It was an opportunity to not only explore a new medium with her abstractions, but also a new color palette.

Hola, soy **Mila Garcia**. I was born in Rochester, New York and brought up in Montevideo, Uruguay. I was introduced to various arts including dance, ballet, ceramics and piano when I was 6 years old, and I have been painting ever since. After high school I went on to study fashion design at the University of Buenos Aires in Argentina before moving to Denver, and I have been Denver based for the past ten years. Though mostly self-taught, I have studied under Kevin Weckbach and been teacher's assistant to Jeff Wenzel at the Art Students League of Denver for a couple years. I love to travel, spending time outside and in different cultures nourishes me as an artist. As well as cooking, I fell in love with Vietnamese cuisine while abroad learning Thai massage. I spend my days making art and doing body work, and my evenings exploring Vietnamese-inspired culinary creations.

When I finished this painting, I felt like it was about fantasy. There's a rhythm about it. How it guided my eyes this one evening. It was born one mark after another. To an action there was a reaction. Intuitively and sometimes more calculated or reasoned. This is the first painting in many where I successfully used color in a different way. I'd like for the viewer to look at the painting and after a few minutes to be grasped by it. I want *the deer sing to the elk* to spark curiosity in the person. Make them want to follow the shapes, lines, and color to different tiny worlds. That's where it takes me.

Ariana Hoch is an abstract artist who translates her surroundings through colorful palettes and thick expressive brushstrokes. Creating is a constant exploration of color and she enjoys mixing media to create rich saturated palettes and thick textures on both linen and paper. Her process is expressive and very creative with many of her projects involving collaborations with other artists. Ariana is currently based out of Boulder, Colorado.

I painted this piece outside layering pools of saturated paint with expressive brush marks, submerging one another over and over again. Each layer drying in the sun.

Madeline Job was born in Clearwater, FL, and holds a BA in Geography from the University of Florida and an MFA in Drawing & Painting from the University of Colorado Boulder. She attended Virginia Commonwealth University's Summer Studio Program in 2017. Her work has been exhibited across the United States.

My home is along Florida's coast, a place which promises play, relaxation, and fantasy fulfillment through advertising. I paint to capture the tension between my ideas of Florida's coast and the reality of the physical place. I use exaggerated color and abstract shapes to privilege sensation over representation. In the making of

Sunset, I washed the canvas over and over again to smooth the painted surface. While one aspect of the painting is optimized, another experiences loss: the color fades as the surface becomes smooth. This is similar to an experience of coming home: my internal ideas, informed by advertising and imagination, fade as I come into contact with the physical reality of the place. I cannot have both at once.

Here, a set of sunset shapes create a central rectangular structure. Around this central structure, ovals, functioning as pebbles or droplets, are suspended. Not only is there tension in the translation of the image from internal space to physical space, but tension within the motion of the still image, the bright and faded material, the repetition of a set of implied days arranged on one plane.

Precious Kofi's art practice is informed by an openness to observe, feel, and experience her inner and outer worlds. She is interested in examining what might appear as ugly, and what is acknowledged as beautiful in human form and in nature. Colors we classify as unattractive, the process of aging, and the passing of time are what excites and inspires Kofi. Related to this notion, Kofi collects autumn leaves in a rainbow of colors and arranges them into bouquets around her home. The depth they show as they die is fascinating. Are they now less valuable than they were before? The cyclic nature of seasons is a constant meditative and physical sensation that feels like a mirror to her female form.

For Kofi, composition and performance remain inseparable during the act of creation. Her body in motion, brush in hand in contact with the canvas – she is able to connect the internal and external. In this creative space, the expression of emotion, dance, story, abstraction, and figuration is connected to color and feels boundless. The dance between abstract representation and solid object where aspects of Kofi's work reside, allows for continual transformation as she is transformed by the environment she creates in. The process of painting becomes as revealing as her fingerprint. With each piece she creates, Kofi constantly relearns the essence of herself, how she shows up in the world, and how art allows for an open, raw conversation. It is in painting that she cannot hide, not even from herself.

Gwen Marie has painted for the last 15 years as a watercolor and acrylic artist with emphasis on subjects such as African American cowgirls and landscapes. She studied at the Denver Art Students League with special instructors such as Sandra Kaplan, Dennis Pendleton, and Barbara Fruella. She has taken plein air workshops from artist Peggy McGivern in Taos and has also painted in Lucca, Italy. Gwen is influenced by the colorful modernism of Georgia O'Keeffe and has shown her works at the Given Institute in Aspen (a one woman show), and several galleries in the arts district on Sante Fe in Denver. She has exhibited in shows for the Denver Watercolor Society at the Denver Botanic Gardens and at the Lakewood and the Golden Foothills Art Center. She lives in Denver and can be contacted at gwenmarie2@cs.com

I paint to tell my story - African American, Native American, woman, designer, survivor, traveler. Travels provide ideas to capture light, texture, and color through the force of the brush's stroke. I try to show intimacy hidden beneath chaos. I mix paints with my brushes, fingers, and palette knives. My marks pull shapes out of strenuous colors that consume the canvas. I hope my paintings reveal a truth, a truth that life's beauty can be used to forge our journeys.

Christine Nguyen was born and raised in California and currently resides in Aurora, Colorado. She is a lover of animals, plants, and nature. She received her B.F.A from California State University, Long Beach and M.F.A from University of California, Irvine. Exhibitions of her work have been shown nationally and internationally. Her works can be found in various collections such as the J.Paul Getty Museum Department of Photographs, Getty Research Institute, Armand Hammer Museum, Grunwald Center for Graphic Art, Los Angeles World Airport's

Collection, Cedars- Sinai in Los Angeles, CA; Burger Collection, Hong Kong; The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), Hanoi, Vietnam; Long Beach Museum of Art, Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum in Long Beach, California; Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio; and Microsoft Collection. She has been an Artist In Residence at Montello Foundation, NV ; Pacific Bonsai Museum, WA; Gyeongju Int. Residency Art Festa 2018, Korea; Theodore Payne Foundation, CA, BaikArt with Cemeti Art House, Indonesia; U.S Dept. of Interior- BLM Eastern interior AIR, Alaska; Wildfjords (WFAR), Iceland; Montalvo Art Center, CA; Tamarind Institute, NM; and the Headlands Center for the Arts, CA.

My work draws upon the imagery of nature, the sciences, and the cosmos but it is not limited to a conventional reading of these realms. It imagines that the depths of the ocean reach into outer space, that through an organic prism, vision can fluctuate between the micro- and macroscopic. My practice is devoted to the natural world and its curiosities. This piece is a continuous series of paintings I've been making focusing on the auras of plants depicted in its abstract form.

Born in Berkely, California, **Sara Noel** grew up in a family of Artists, many of whom are successful in their own right. Family trips to museums and exhibits contributed to Sara's love of Art and a desire to follow this calling. Artistic expression wasn't so much encouraged by her family, as it was expected.

Sara attended the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, California during a turbulent time in American creative culture; the exploration of expressionism and abstraction happening on the East Coast quickly found its way to the West Coast. Literature, music, and the visual arts were responding to this nearly experimental world, moving beyond older and more traditional art forms. At the same time, Berkely became an incubator for the Free Speech Movement. Together these elements helped create a new and exciting world of art and creativity.

A few of the artists that inspire Sara's work are Joan Mitchell, Elaine and Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Elliott Hundley, and Sarah Sze. Sara's process involves spontaneity and improvisation. Painting for her is an adventure into the unknown -- to lose yourself and then discover something familiar of something new. Especially now in these times of pervasive technology and global strife, Sara believes that we need and want connections that include play, self-expression, and spontaneity.

Emily Roan is a Visual Artist inspired by paradox, metamorphosis, and "The Butterfly Effect." Roan's work embodies abstraction as a language that communicates subtler, invisible spaces. These spaces she creates form a bridge between opposites such as chaos and pattern, time and infinity, as well as measurement and potential. With an emphasis on metamorphosis as a symbol that connects the physical and non-physical, she is focused on de-stigmatizing mental illness and embracing trauma or uncertainty as personal and collective fuel for transformation. Emily Roan received her BA in Fine Arts with a concentration in Drawing from Colorado State University in 2015. She has exhibited her collection of paintings, sculptural drawings, and installations in Solo and Group Exhibitions, as well as Non-Profit Events, and also received an Award of Excellence at 40 West Arts in Denver. Roan currently lives in Denver, Colorado; and is an active member of Spark Gallery.

The current evolution of my work is moving toward the exploration of quantum theories and human identity. In the last hundred years, physicists have discovered paradoxical concepts that reveal deeper realities about the physical world. Through my research of these theories, my work investigates questions of interconnectivity and the power of emotion, intention, and perceptual influence over our experiences.



Angela Craven, *The Roots are Silently at Work*



Kristina Davies, *This is Not What She Had Planned*



Mila Garcia, *The Deer Sing to the Elk*



Ariana Hoch, *Submerged*



Madeline Job, *Sunset*



Precious Kofi, *Mblaenhle*



Gwen Marie, *Three Fish Swim*



Christine Nguyen, *Leaves Auras With Sky*



Sara Noel, *Inspiration - Elliott Hundley*



Emily Roan, *Off the Radar*



Bell Projects seeks to support local artists and their work by curating and presenting exhibitions on a monthly basis in their gallery space located at 2822 E. 17th Avenue, Denver, Colorado 80206. All exhibitions are free to attend and are open to the public. For more information, please email info.bellprojects@gmail.com or visit bell-projects.com