

BIENVENU STEINBERG & J

Andrea Belag

Currents

February 23 - March 23, 2023

Bienvenu Steinberg & J is pleased to present *Currents*, Andrea Belag's first solo show with the gallery. The exhibition features a group of paintings created over the past three years.

Since the 1990s, Belag has constantly modified her approach to abstraction through various transitions and mutations. Her internal genealogy matters as much as her relationship to a tradition of abstraction. In the words of artist and critic Julian Kreimer: "it's not hard to metaphorize those traces, lines left behind by larger swaths of paint that were wiped away, lines whose own shifting colors reveal how they are made by what they've touched and changed. But as with so many of Belag's paintings, the point isn't to nail down the metaphors (...) Belag's work becomes an edge condition for painting without flirting with minimalist near-nothingness; it tests out where beauty can emerge, and what we can get to work. It opens up from a few wiped shapes into a sophisticated object able to transport one into a reverie about slippage, slipping away, the here and not hereness of life, death, and the varieties of love".

Geometry and order have progressively given place to swirling swaths of color, solidity replaced by suspended motion. Painting is an all consuming action. She paints standing up, leaning over and often walking around the canvas placed horizontally. It starts with the arm and as she walks around the canvas her whole body gets involved. Transparent colors on the surface are not fixed and can create form or dissolve into light. She rubs, smudges, and scraps to create translucent, softly luminous surfaces where the brushwork is strikingly visible. "My paintings are contemporary because I paint in the here and now. It's unavoidable. The artists I feel indebted to are Henri Matisse, Mary Heilmann, Joan Mitchell, Gerhard Richter, Bill Traylor, and Japanese Zen gardens. Style is a dead-end, but I have a point of view. I love transparency

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and the touch of materials, so I have created a way of painting where I make this possible. I use mostly transparent pigments and fine linen, and I paint wet into wet. The marks are on one layer of the painted surface with very little overlap or pentimento. Color makes space and light come through the paint and emotion comes through as well. There is fear and desire in painting, and that's addictive. Haptics are the touchstones." (Andrea Belag, 2023)

Andrea Belag lives and works in New York and Far Rockaway. She attended Boston University, Bard College, and The New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting & Sculpture. She was awarded a public commission from the New York City Cultural Council, an outdoor installation, Waves, for EC 268 in Far Rockaway, to be completed in 2026. In 2022, she received an American Academy of Arts and Letters Purchase Prize. She is also the recipient of a 2015 MTA Arts & Design Commission, Brooklyn Transitions. In 2002, Belag attended a Rockefeller Foundation Residency in Bellagio, Italy, and in 1999 she received a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship for Painting. Belag has received a prestigious Yaddo residency three times. Her paintings are in several museum collections such as, The Jewish Museum, New York; The Newark Museum of Art, NJ; the Mead Art Museum, Amherst, MA; New Jersey State Museum, Trenton; Sprengel Museum, Hanover, Germany and others.

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