



The Vibrant Energy of Sally Bruno's Art

Story by Abby Luby Photography by Andrea B. Swenson

Visual art takes us on a journey. And the wonderful part of that journey is where you end up. Sally Bruno's scintillating and vibrant paintings carry us to a place where our senses are fully engaged and the wonder of contemplation suspends time.

Bruno, a Tuxedo Park based artist, creates most of her oil paintings on large canvases,

giving her enough space to express unique variations on intertwining motifs. She incorporates recognizable images that initially ground the viewer, but also serve as a springboard for her whimsical sense of pulsating patterns and vivid colors. Her deft hand offers us thick layers of deeply textural forms floating over and around repetitive patterns in a rhythm of dynamic energy.

Bruno, who in 2010 earned a BFA from Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles and an MFA from Claremont Graduate University (also in Los Angeles) in 2014, says her work was informed by studying sculpture and ceramics. "At Otis the big sculpture and ceramics department were two areas I got into. That's why my work is very textural. But then

I fell in love with painting and everything else disappeared." A year after she graduated, she had her debut show at LAM Gallery in Los Angeles featuring 15 large works. "These were based on the idea of joy where I used a very saturated color palette."

Bruno's canvases flirt with abstraction, teasing a variety of voices out of recognizable forms. Flowers become deeply textural, surreal expressions that pop out and recede as your eye drinks in the endless possibilities of how we see flowers, and indeed, how we see nature in general. In "Sunflower," flowers are oxygenated with color, propelling a surge of motion among cascading lines and intense color. A pattern of rippling ocean waves shows a duet of sky blue and cerulean in an









undulating background against a vase of flowers facing us, uplifted with a determined shimmer. "The patterns are what I describe as more 'interior patterns' — meaning they are more or less a backdrop for the main image," she explains. "I was always drawn to the idea of movement in work and how the visual pattern affects the viewer."

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In "Two Woman" (84" x 120" 2014) patterns fall within the boundaries of a defined shape — a table, a wall, a window shade, a bottle of wine. As our gaze circles back, these shapes and patterns emerge and recede, rise and fall, redefining the work. Most of Bruno's paintings work that way. The viewer initially takes in the entire topology and as our photoreceptors are stimulated, we delve in. "I like the idea of that place where abstraction and representation meet," says Bruno. "It's interesting when a viewer looks at the work and asks herself 'is it a pattern or is it a table?'"

In her current work, patterns are more than integral to the composition, they are the composition. Bruno says the change started to happen when she moved from the West Coast back to New York. "I wanted the pattern to all of the sudden be the whole experience, not just a part of the experience," she says. "I started removing some of the high saturation and taking the color out. I had not used black in any of my paintings — even minimally — for a few years."

The shift to using a new palette is evident in "Wild Things," (6' by 8' 2015) a large, mostly black and white painting inspired by zebras who make their appearance if you look long enough. With just a few pointed dabs of color, the monotoes emphasize a variety of patterns — some feel like a 'frenzied squall' and others a 'gentle breeze' in an oscillating weave of movement.

In other paintings, amidst the swirling monotoes, the zebras are more accessible for the viewer to hook on to. "Some people had no idea there were zebras in one of my paintings. They just didn't see them," says Bruno. "But once viewers took another moment to digest it all, they saw the zebras and the whole thing changed for them."

Coming up in Spring is a new venue just down the road in Sloatsburg that will permanently showcase her work. Bruno's brother, entrepreneur/developer Michael Bruno, is expanding his Valley Rock Inn & Mountain Club to include a new art locale called "Gallery 66" with floor to ceiling glass windows. With the growing popularity of Sloatsburg as a destination point, her displayed works will undoubtedly draw folks in to explore, ponder and embark on an odyssey of visual intrigue.



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