

Ojai Invitational 2017

CALIFORNIA SPACE & LIGHT

Kelly Berg | Brad Howe | Andy Moses | Jennifer Wolf

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A collaboration with EMS Arts

Kelly Berg | Brad Howe | Andy Moses | Jennifer Wolf

May 25, 2017 – July 2, 2017 Porch Gallery Ojai. Ca

A portion of the proceeds from the exhibition will benefit Ojai's Carolyn GlasoeBailey Foundation, a public art foundation in Ojai, CA focused on the support and advancement of the Arts & Sciences.

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“These artists’ shared penchant for speaking an abstract language to describe the outside world, whether materialist and process-driven or heartily conceptualist, is an impulse formed in the embrace of the natural world, in thrall to the place we share. California.”

--Shana Nys Dambrot

The Ojai Invitational : California Space & Light

Kelly Berg, Brad Howe, Andy Moses, and Jennifer Wolf as artists have a lot in common, and also claim a great many points of divergence. But between them, they tend to the legacy of modern Southern California abstraction, and especially the aspects of its practice that were nurtured on the region's rich landscape traditions. Josef Albers once said, "Abstraction is real, probably more real than nature," and he might have been speaking straight to the work of these four artists -- whose works are assembled for The Ojai Invitational 2017 edition, *California Space & Light*.

Another title for the show might have been, "Geological Survey," and not only because this assorted quartet's non-figurative works articulate some brazenly direct relationships with the landscape. The aesthetic of that landscape in question so clearly, incontrovertibly, passionately belongs to California -- the same geography celebrated in the Invitational's stated goal of nurturing the visual art discourse along the Santa Barbara-to-San Diego continuum. "Collectively, their work leads one to question and appreciate the exceptionally Californian experience of light and space," says curator Eric Minh Swenson, and indeed in its evocative optical physicality, abstractionist though it is, this is work that both describes a palpable sense of place and also deftly transcends that place's boundaries.

Painter Jennifer Wolf is well known for the intricacy, charm and rigor of her process; she makes her own pigment from the raw mineral materials of the earth whose contours she traces in her compositions. The romance of this is irresistible. But what is more mysterious and compelling still, is how despite her brushless collaboration with the laws of physics in which she exercises only partial control over the non-figurative outcome, she manages to create works that are absolutely legible as the earthen, oceanic, familiar and exotic locations where her pigment stones were harvested. It's a kind of energy/optic exchange in which it is perhaps the soul rather than the surface of the earth we see.

Andy Moses sets up hyperchromatic science-lab like experiments in his painting studio, engaging gravity and fluid momentum in his pursuit of endless horizons, fractal dunes, and opalescent floodplains. He works, like Wolf, directly with physics and the consequences of constant motion rather than the intentionality of brush and gesture. We see not so much the hand of the artist in these paintings, but rather his body. In the variegated richness of detail and at increasingly ambitious scale, it is impossible not to image the artist at work, in motion, gymnastic and focused. The results are flamboyant and meditative, surreal and meteorological, glowing and serpentine whose contents are up for debate but whose endless cosmic summer is on full display.

Brad Howe is the sculptor among these painters, known for his abstract, freestanding welded forms -- abstract geometrical arrangements executed with charming majesty at both intimate and architectural scale. His work is fairly synonymous with ideas about public art, smooth and lively, site-responsive and welcoming. Yet in its deceptive simplicity and post-industrial materialism, there exists a panoply of rarified, reductive but energetic cues taken from both nature and art history. A nearly symphonic progression of intersecting planes, positive and negative spaces, crisp and gentle lines and engagement with ambient light offers a phenomenological bridges between concerns of painting and design, abstraction, and experience.

Kelly Berg is more figurative than most artists whom one might consider abstractionists. Her attraction to nature tends toward the operatic and disastrous -- eruptions, conflagrations, lightning strikes, ice ages, primordial shockwaves. She is drawn to the eccentric meteorological topographies of rocky canyons, crater lakes, thunderheads, and tornados. But in her manner of depiction she operates in the spirit of artists like JMW Turner, who rather than invent a purified abstraction purged of realism, chose as his subjects natural phenomena like rain, fog, and choppy seas, which in their own forms already tended toward the liminal and amorphous. Volcanic, atmospheric disturbances and the crystalline shards of shattered stalactites are pretty wild looking to begin with, and Berg not only renders but dimensionally builds sculptural surfaces with almost diorama-like resolution, mineral-rich lands of extreme impasto.

These artists' shared penchant for speaking an abstract language to describe the outside world, whether materialist and process-driven or heartily conceptualist, is an impulse formed in the embrace of the natural world, in thrall to the place we share. California.

--Shana Nys Dambrot

Kelly Berg

Kelly Berg was born in 1986 in Concord, Massachusetts and raised outside of Minneapolis, Minnesota. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2008 and has maintained a studio in Los Angeles since 2009. Her work has been featured in exhibitions at The Barrick Museum, The Carnegie Art Museum, The Manhattan Beach Art Center, Mana Contemporary and the Lancaster Museum of Art and History, among other notable venues.

Berg's paintings are multi-layered works that capture both moments of divergence and convergence in the ever shifting and changing landscape of the earth and how it relates to the human experience. In both color and form, Berg's paintings relate to the geological and natural phenomena she is exploring with thick mineral and metallic tones and rough lava-like textures. Shards of mirror Plexiglas and metal mesh disrupt the surface suggesting momentous shifts in the earth's crust and leaves behind evidence from the action she uses to create capturing moments of metamorphosis. The sharp jagged forms and spikes suggesting something chaotic and even violent, yet they are elegantly integrated creating interplay between the exposed flat areas of the surface. These breaks in texture expose carefully rendered and scratched images of caves, lightning, earthquake rifts, volcano calderas, and pyramids like windows into mysterious and sometimes dark worlds. Delicate patterning and accents of rich golds act as an abstracted frame for the imagery, suggesting something both powerful and magical is contained inside.

Kelly Berg



Golden Electric, 2017
Acrylic, Ink, Iridescent Film, and Copper Wire Mesh on Wood
30" x 24"

Kelly Berg



Desert Mystery, 2016
Acrylic and Ink on Wood
18" x 14"

Kelly Berg



Electroluminescence, 2016
Acrylic, Ink, and Metallized ABS on Wood
12" x 12" (variable)

Kelly Berg



Prismatica, 2016
Acrylic, Ink, and Gold Mirror Plexiglass on Wood
8" x 10"

Brad Howe

Brad Howe began his career in Brazil after studying history at the University of Sao Paulo. His work presents the influence of inquiry into the aesthetics of various cultures and distinct movements in the continuum of art history. His work continues to connect with international communities, exhibiting and completing site-specific commissions both in the US and abroad. According to critic Shana Nys Dambrot in Fabrik magazine, Howe's high-polished, and high-reflective, steel sculptures create an "experiential narrative...[that] highlights the operational dynamics of perception as an action." Known for his sculpture practice, Howe's focus also includes the representation of objects through diverse means, including photography.

Brad Howe



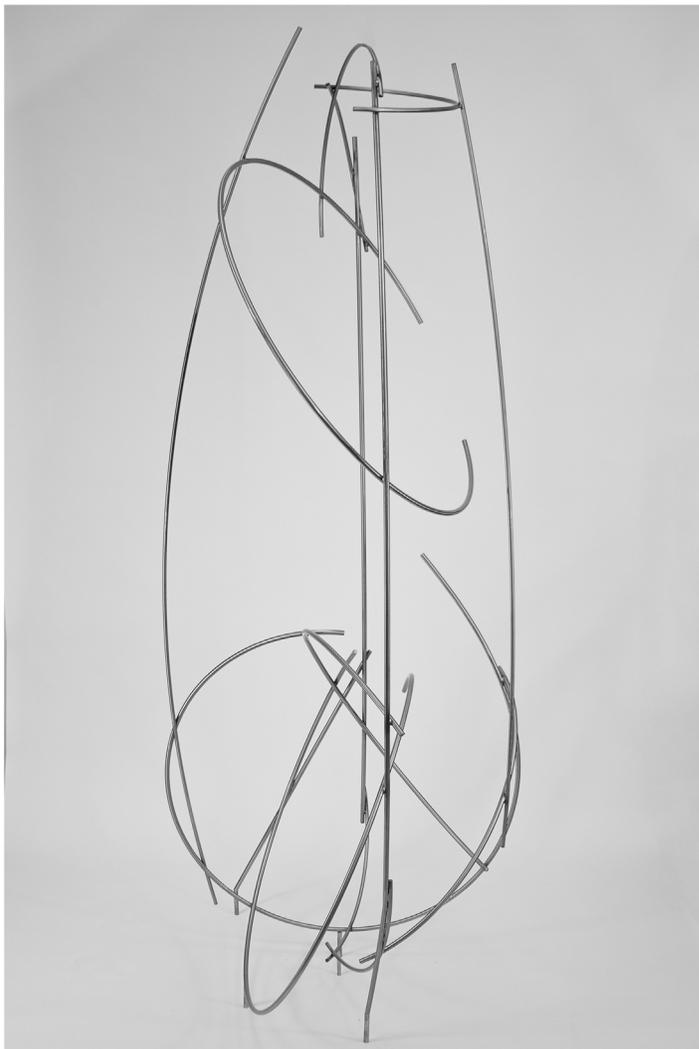
Glimpse, 2016
Stainless Steel
48" x 42" x 7"

Brad Howe



Semblance, 2016
Stainless Steel
24" x 20" x 14" (variable)

Brad Howe



Chitin, 2012
Stainless Steel
115" x 49" x 48"

Brad Howe

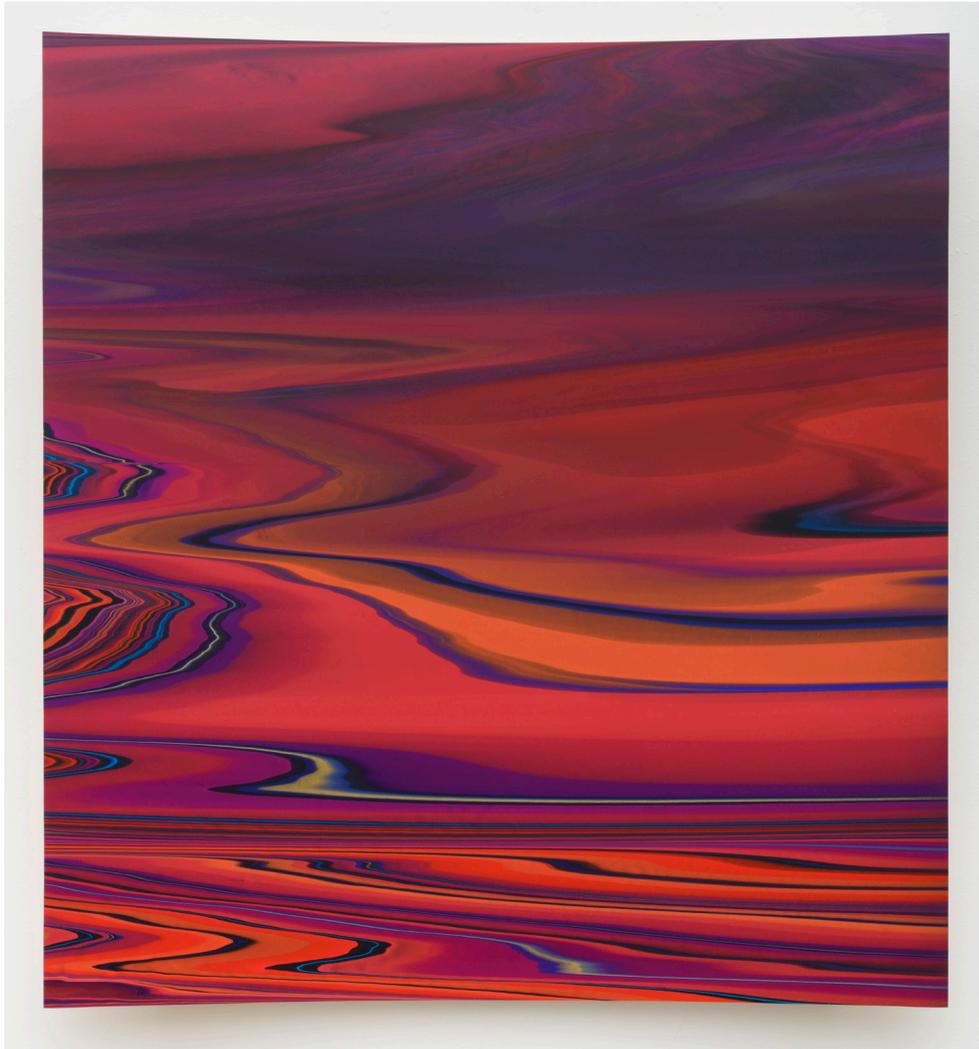


Tricky Day, 2016
Stainless Steel
24" x 18" x 18" (variable)

Andy Moses

Andy Moses lives and works in Venice, California. He was born in Los Angeles in 1962 and attended California Institute of the Arts from 1979 to 1981. At CalArts he focused on performance, film, and painting, studying with Michael Asher, John Baldessari, and Barbara Kruger. In 1981 he moved to New York and worked for the artist Pat Steir. Later that year he developed a type of process painting that is simultaneously abstract and representational. Moses is interested in pushing the physical properties of paint through chemical reactions, viscosity interference, and gravity dispersion to create elaborate compositions that mimic nature and its forces. He was in his first group exhibition at Artists Space in 1986 entitled selections. He had his first solo exhibition in New York at Annina Nosei Gallery in 1987. He has continued to exhibit his work in New York, Los Angeles, and abroad over the past twenty-five years. He moved back to Los Angeles in 2000 where he continues to refine and expand the vocabulary of his specific painting processes, imagery, and interrelationships with the technical and natural world.

Andy Moses



Geomorphology 1004 (side view), 2016
Acrylic on Polycarbonate mounted on Concave wood panel
47" x 43"

Andy Moses



Geomorphology 1004 (side view), 2016
Acrylic on Polycarbonate mounted on Concave wood panel
47" x 43"

Andy Moses



Morphology 245, 2016
Acrylic on Polycarbonate
20" x 20"

Andy Moses



Morphology 246, 2016
Acrylic on Polycarbonate mounted on wood panel
20" x 20"

Jennifer Wolf

Interested in communicating ideas of history, place and nature in her painting practice, Jennifer Wolf utilizes a combination of natural pigments, historic techniques and modern painting mediums to capture the pure essence of color. Unabashedly beautiful, Wolf's paintings explore the elemental nature of color and texture. Jennifer keenly controls the flow of her hand-made paints, isolating areas of lacy, textural pattern that overlap spaces of vivid color which blossom across the surface in energetic washes. Wolf's compositions allude to the natural world in a manner that is both veiled and complex. Henry David Thoreau remarked in 1853 – "I have a room all to myself; it is nature," – Wolf's paintings feel like Thoreau's room, immersive spaces that embrace the viewer in environments that could be under the sea, encased in clouds or inside the faceted walls of a gemstone. Jennifer Wolf is from Ventura, CA. She received her BA in Art History from UCLA and her MFA from Otis College of Art and Design.

Jennifer Wolf



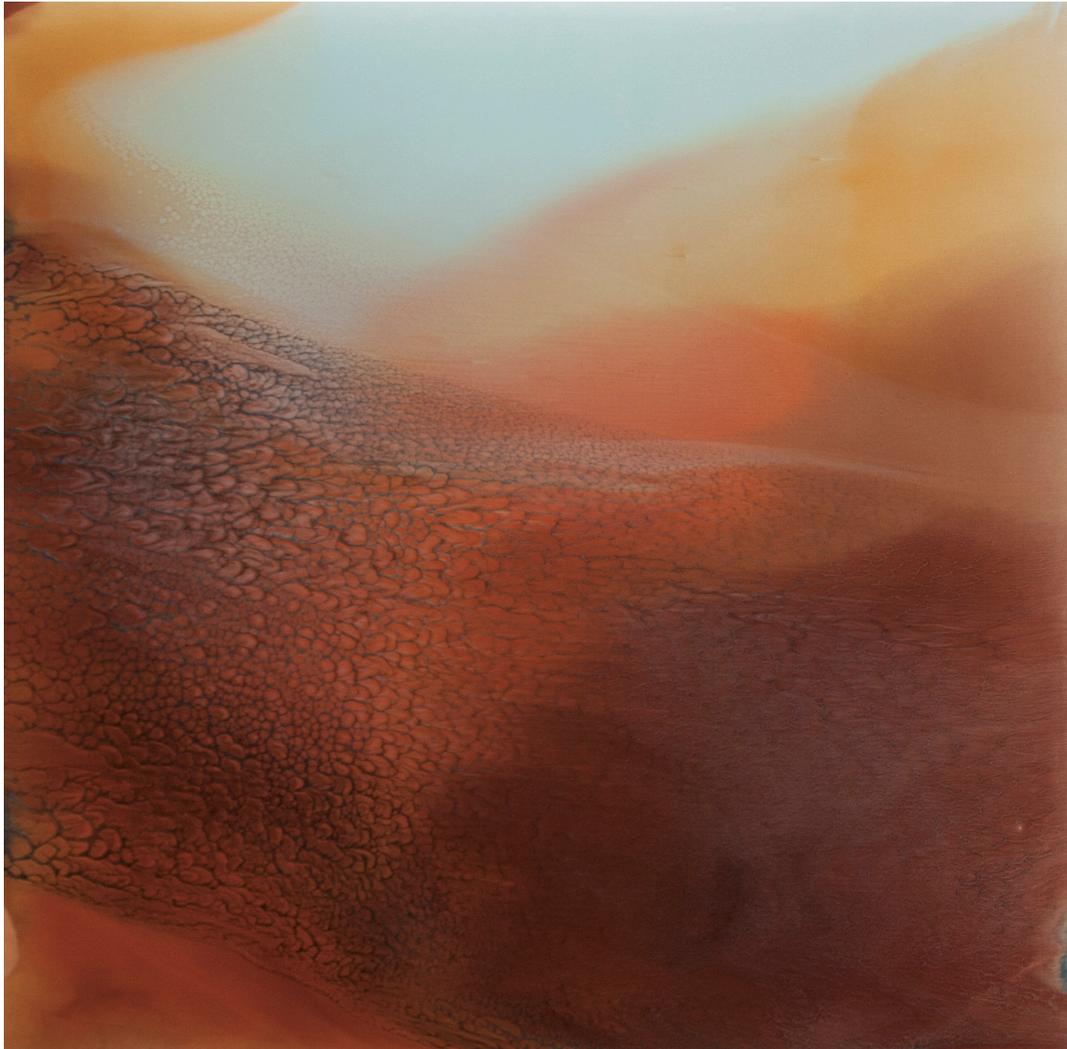
Landscape #17, 2013
Handmade Mineral Pigment and Acrylic Medium on Canvas over Wood Panel
48" x 48"

Jennifer Wolf

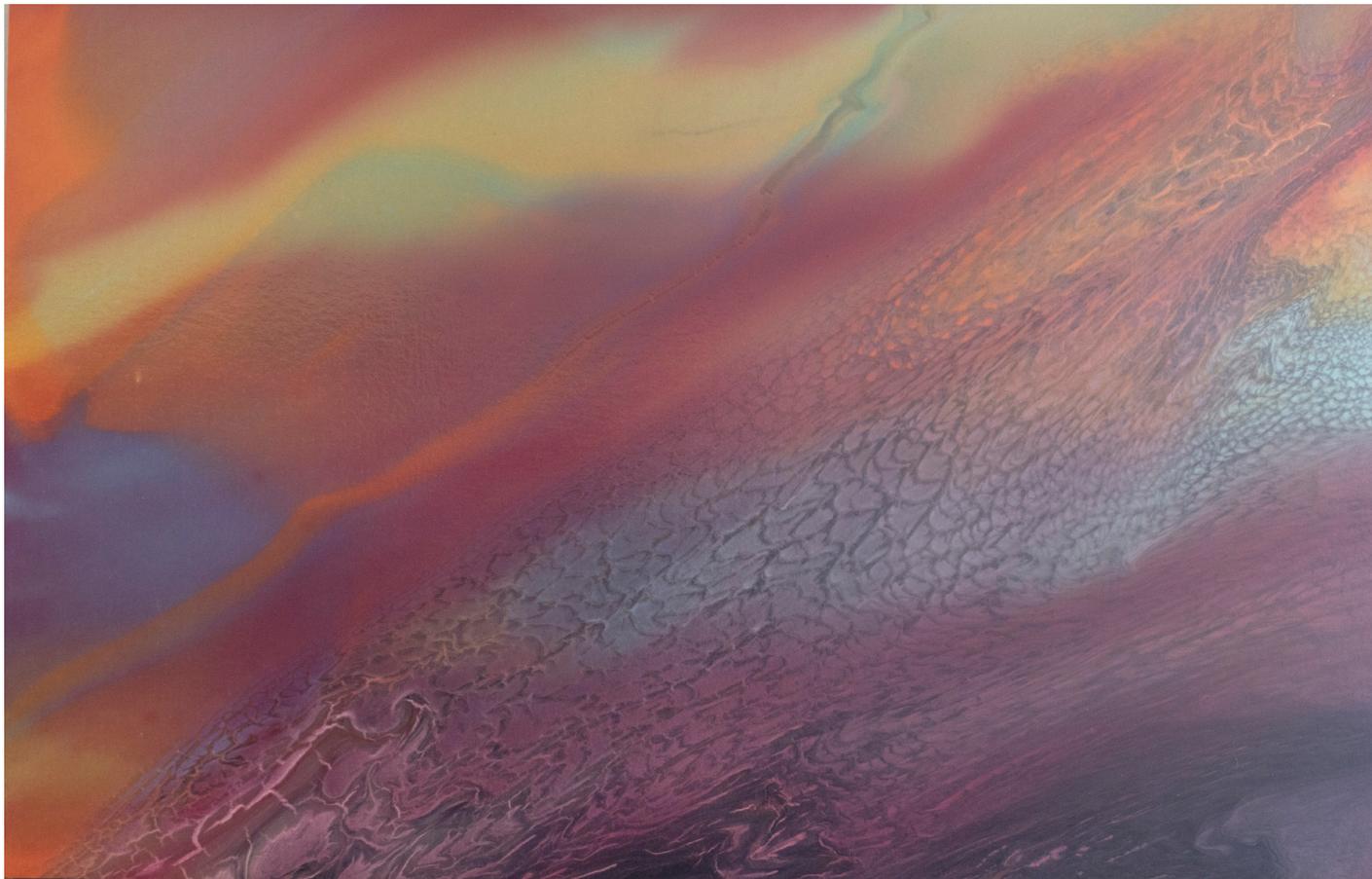


Cochineal Study #11, 2012
Handmade Mineral Pigment and Acrylic Medium on Canvas Over Wood Panel
24" x 36"

Jennifer Wolf



Landscape #11, 2013
Handmade Mineral Pigment and Acrylic Medium on Canvas Over Wood Panel
48" x 48"



Cochineal, Indigo, Ochre Study #4, 2015
Handmade Mineral Pigment, Natural Dyes and Acrylic Medium on Canvas Over Wood Panel
30" x 48"

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