Back in 1964, the painter Joan Snyder underwent a youthful epiphany. After moving to Europe, she realised the limitations of her Charles Burchfield-inspired landscape paintings and, as she puts it, quickly ‘fell apart’. On her return to the US, she set her sights on making abstract works that had the same emotional ‘feeling’ as her previous paintings. From that early discovery until today, her work has presented multiple stories told via various methods of technical and material experimentation – among these subjects are the repeated themes of nature, sexuality, politics and, ultimately, highly personal autobiography.

For her latest exhibition at Chelsea’s Cristin Tierney Gallery, the seventy-two-year-old Snyder collaborated with Anne McKeown, master papermaker at Rutgers University’s Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions, in New Brunswick. Together they produced a new body of work in one of Snyder’s characteristically lusty baroque mediums. Made up of coloured cotton, abaca and linen paper pulp that the artist spreads in layers on a prepared surface, her newfangled ‘paintings’ feature pocked, rutted surfaces that suggest fields of soft autumn grass and ponds filled with flowers seen through a blurry camera lens. To these modest-size works, the artist also affixes bits of fabric, dried flowers or herbs.

The results constitute deep surfaces with unabashed interplays of colour and texture that evoke natural processes, like sunlight, as well as less exact human correspondences, like calm or awe. The painting Like a Melon Field (2013), for example, looks alternately like a Monet garden in blues and greens or an especially optimistic corner of an Anselm Kiefer painting. By contrast, a more visceral work like The Virgin (2010) features Snyder in full-bore feminist mode: a landscape that is also a blooming valva partnered with cross-stitched furrows, it returns the artist to less ethereal, more earthly content.