

GERING & LÓPEZ GALLERY

ARTnews

JOAN SNYDER: GERING & LOPEZ

Joan Snyder has been scribbling lean orchestrations of simple line and pure color on notebook pages for decades. In this exhibition of works on paper from the late 1960s and '70s, and a handful of recent paintings on linen, the artist eloquently conveyed her admiration for the polytonality of musical compositions.

Despite their sketchy execution on small, gridded journal sheets, many of Snyder's early pieces reveal a composed, tidy harmony. Allusions to the language of musical scores abound: in *Disintegrate Down* (1971), loose pencil marks delineate something like ledger lines, while watercolor strokes differing in length and hue, suggesting notes, dance between them. The format of *Double Symphony* (1976), perhaps the most legible work on view, seems modeled on an open book of sheet music, with two adjacent spaces separated by an illusory spine drawn down the center. Echoing the narrative progression of an opera, the work's imagery evolves from country cottages and shopping lists—dreamy depictions of domestic bliss—to urgent, tortured curlicues and ominous blocks of red that might represent the fallout of failed love.

While Snyder's drawings are paragons of restraint, her new paintings are somewhat heavier. *Song Cycle I (for Molly)*, 2011, is a weighty affair, smeared in thick, buckling impasto as knotted and pocked as rotting fruit, and its central arrangement of bulbous forms recalls the

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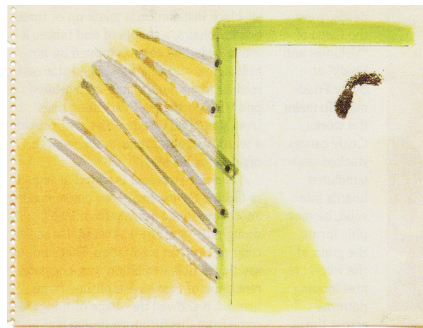
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disturbingly deformed figures of Art Brut. Installed nearby, a 1968 suite of modest pastels offered a striking contrast—and constituted the show's poignant climax.

Blue/Triangle/Landscape is a sweeping, angular expanse of cobalt sea under a sky dappled with golden clouds. The landscape finds its gracious counterpart in *Pink Sky*, where a dusty, rose-tinged horizon hovers over soft earthy forms, writhing back to life from a cool slumber like the first buds of spring.

In its earnest gestures and expressive power, Snyder's work mines the Abstract Expressionist legacy of impassioned grandeur. But as this exhibition affirmed, her spare touch is unerringly refined and elegant—an unassuming melody sung in perfect pitch.



Joan Snyder, *Green Doorway*, 1968, pastel, ink, and glitter on paper, 9" x 12". Gering & López.