

CANADA 60 Lispenard Street,
New York, NY 10013:
Tues–Sat, 10am–6pm

CANADA is an artist-
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TWO COATS OF PAINT

Lahav, Jac. "Joan Snyder's Brilliant Command of Chaos." *Two Coats of Paint*, 23 Jan. 2024, twocoatsofpaint.com/2024/01/joan-snyders-brilliant-command-of-chaos.html.

Joan Snyder's brilliant command of chaos

"ComeClose," Joan Snyder's current exhibition at Canada, testifies to her enduring brilliance and evolving artistic language. Now 83, Snyder has been a trailblazer since the 1970s. With her "stroke paintings," she disrupted the Minimalism that was then fashionable, left cold by its austerity and masculinity. Her rebellion made Snyder a feminist shaper of contemporary abstract art. The distinctive juxtaposition of vivid colors and earthy backdrops in her work reflects a lifelong determination to explore and push its boundaries. The exhibition's title is an invitation to examine not just the art but also why we make it.

Snyder's abstractions are both unapologetically wistful and vibrantly unruly. As the gallery's co-founder Wallace Whitney puts it: "Snyder mixes ... moments up like a deck of cards and deals them out onto the canvas." Yet she is also compelled to make sense of the world without minimizing its complexity. "ComeClose" explores the ground as both physical phenomenon and metaphor, rendering landscapes of experience and emotion.

Her immersion in nature – Snyder's Woodstock, New York, studio is in a forest, her Brooklyn studio an urban oasis with a koi pond and a willow tree – comes through in works like *Orange Band*. The painting features



Joan Snyder, *Burlap Bars*, 2022, oil, acrylic, rosebuds, twigs, burlap on linen, 54 × 66 inches

horizontal overlays of color, gesture, and texture on raw canvas, a bright orange stripe floating above while also permeating a dark brown substrate. Other paintings likewise register nature's layering, casting sediment as sentiment. While the evocation of roots burrowing into soil gives the paintings a gestural, musical vibe, they also feel inertial and permanent – perhaps owing to the application of pigment to raw canvas without the mediation of gesso. If the canvas is the land, which hosts the past, the paintings amount to archaeology.

As much as they may conjure earthly science, though, certain signature features “have a magic to them,” says Whitney, referring specifically to the twigs attached to the surfaces of paintings. “They aren't random but have a talismanic, herbal quality.” A little tranquil enchantment is welcome in a world that often seems to be on fire, and Snyder's paintings resonate soothingly while renouncing escapism. They remind me of new-growth woodlands and planned forest fires, suggesting that burning the earth sometimes allows new ideas to blossom.

Beyond this measured note of optimism, Snyder's paintings capture the cyclical character of life and the resilience required to foster regeneration in times of destruction. Her work is an anchoring force of hard-earned reassurance as well as a call for critical introspection. It challenges the viewer to summon the courage to confront and resolve what ails us through shared sadness, beauty, and joy amid the chaos.