



# Sensory **Impact**

## **American Abstract Artists**

May 1, 2014 to April 30, 2015

**Reception and Panel Discussion**

Wednesday, September 17, 2014 5:30-9:00

**Morgan Stanley International**

Headquarters, Global Wealth Management

2000 Westchester Ave, Purchase, NY

*Exhibition is open by appointment Monday thru Friday*

914-225-6774



This remarkable sample of work by members of American Abstract Artists provides an opportunity to conduct a thought experiment with the help of the Morgan Stanley community. The exhibition's title suggests an approach to abstract imagery that goes beyond the narrow and ultimately false dichotomy of hard-edged geometry on the one hand, and biomorphic forms or gestural application on the other. Such a distinction, readily translated into a classicist/romantic binary, is of limited utility. With its tremendous diversity of pictorial modes, "Sensory Impact" encourages the viewer to respond to visual art in other, more broadly associative ways, engaging the entire human sensory apparatus.

Such an interpretive method pushes past misleading pre-occupations with the artist's temperament or intentions – the issue of how the artist's personality manifests visually in their work – and privileges the viewer's impressions. Whether it is brushy and loose or calibrated and precise, a work might thus be perceived as loud or hushed, sweet or sour, smooth or rough, or redolent of an atmosphere we recognize, or wish we could.

In the West, "visual art" has never been strictly visual. The ancient Greeks posited correspondences between colors of the spectrum and tones of the musical scale. Aristotle equated light and dark hues with clear and muffled sound. Others considered color to be integral to sound, like pitch and duration, an idea that eventually gave rise to the modern concept of timbre. Complex theories of color harmony, sonority and rhythm were developed throughout the Renaissance and into the Modern age.



Modern abstract art, at its inception around 1910, aspired to the condition of the advanced music of the day. Working in Munich, the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky discovered in Arnold Schoenberg's rejection of the rules of consonance in musical composition a theoretical model for the elimination of recognizable imagery in painting. The interplay of color and sound was essential to this moment, and was far more visceral than symbolic or conceptual. In his 1914 "Reminiscences," Kandinsky avers that while mixing paint on his palette, "sometimes I could hear the hiss of the colors as they mingled."

Beginning at about the same time, the Futurists in Milan looked to overturn just about everything in their path, including the presumptive primacy of visuality in painting and sculpture. In his 1913 essay, "The Painting of Sounds, Noises, and Smells," the painter and provocateur Carlo Carrà declared that his goal of "total painting... requires the active cooperation of all the senses." In Carrà's day, neurologists devoted considerable research to the phenomenon of synesthesia, the simultaneous triggering of multiple senses by the same stimulus. But you don't have to be a synesthete to fully experience the work in "Sensory Impact."

Some of the artists in the exhibition address this conceit verbally, via their works' titles. The brooding colors in *Thunder* by James Juszczyk seem to produce an ominous rumble, while Gail Gregg's *Riesling* is fruity, aromatic and a bit acidic. With *Fahrenheit*, Don Voisine alludes to the idea of visual temperature, though whether this tightly packed, slowly churning painting is warm or cool is ultimately up to the viewer.

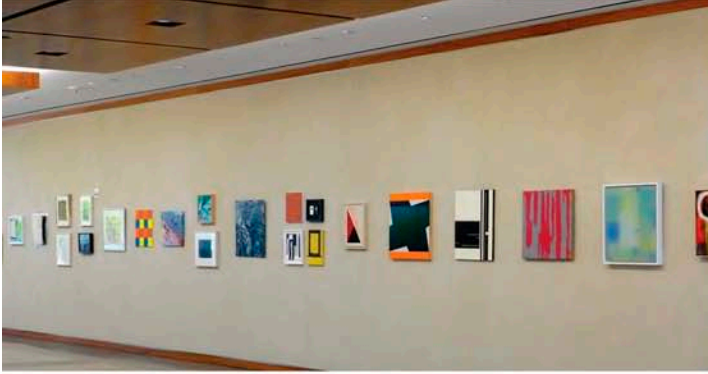


Bright, clear sound is suggested by the interlocking rhythms of Matthew Deleget's *Shuffle (for Ray Barretto)* dedicated to the Brooklyn-born percussionist and giant of Latin jazz. Read left to right, Henry Brown's *Side by Side* tick-tocks like a metronome; *Screwed and Glued #1*, Susan Bonfils' tangle of tightly curling steel ribbons, squeals like electronic feedback. A distinctly vehicular noise – a rushing train? – emanates from Mark Williams's *Demand*, while *Tondo (to Ilya + Esphyr)* by James Gross resonates like a foghorn.

Tactility, of course, is a physical property of all objects that have surfaces, including artworks. *River Library 9* by Raquel Rabinovich, which may have been slippery when wet, is now dry as dust. But painting's haptic illusion sometimes outflanks material reality. Mara Held's *Seventh Clime* comes across as jagged and sharp, while in *Morning Mirage NNW* by Julian Jackson, indistinct contours between swaths of color are blurred, moist. Though its surface is smoothly anonymous, Jeanne Wilkinson's c-print, titled *I-Pad 5*, suggests pillow-like softness, and Lynn Harlow's *Velvet* sends mixed signals, simultaneously glassy and plush.

Punctuated with foil candy wrappers, Martin Ball's untitled mixed-media work cleverly plays on olfactory memory, and Marvin Brown's *Hive, no. 1* updates the still-life genre with an image derived from a bottle of artisanal honey vinegar. You can almost smell the champagne in Kes Zapkus's sparkling (*Salmon*) *Microbic Games*. Palette meets palate in Irene Rousseau's crunchy, peppery *Beyond the Circle A*; Power Boothe's





*Inside Out*, with its jammy undertones, big nose, and long finish; and the briny, astringent *Cross-Track #1* by Nancy Manter. In Emily Berger's untitled painting we encounter lots of peat, and just a hint of smoke.

Longtime AAA member Ed Ruda, recently departed and fondly remembered, is represented here by an untitled painting from 1972. I could not ask for a better example of my thesis. The painting's off-kilter greens and blues are slyly discordant; both effervescent and vegetal, Ed's color augers a shift of register, a change in key. The painting recalls the beautiful opening lines of "The Double Dream of Spring" by John Ashbery: "Mixed days, the mindless years, perceived / With half-parted lips / The way the breath of spring creeps up on you and floors you..."

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**Stephen Maine** is a painter, critic, curator and teacher who lives and works in Brooklyn.

He has been a member of American Abstract Artists since 2007. His paintings sound like the static between radio stations.

**Panel Discussion**

**Wednesday, September 17, 7:00 - 8:00pm**  
**Downstairs in the auditorium**

Max Weintraub, art historian – **moderator**  
Alice Adams, sculptor  
Christine Berry, gallerist, co-director Berry Campbell, NYC  
Phillis Ideal, artist and educator  
Stephen Maine, painter and critic  
Stephen Westfall, artist, writer and educator

**Coffee and dessert served afterward.**

**Transportation available to MetroNorth train station  
in White Plains after Reception.**

Alice Adams	Mara Held	Dorothea Rockburne
Martin Ball	Daniel G. Hill	Ce Roser
Siri Berg	Gilbert Hsiao	Irene Rousseau
Emily Berger	Phillis Ideal	David Row
Susan Bonfils	Julian Jackson	Edwin Ruda*
Power Boothe	James Juszczyk	Edward Shalala
Sharon Brant	Cecily Kahn	Louis Silverstein*
Henry Brown	Marthe Keller	Richard Stone
Marvin Brown	Victor Kord	Clover Vail
James O. Clark	Jane Logemann	Vera Vasek
Mark Dagley	Stephen Maine	Don Voisine
Matthew Deleget	Katinka Mann	Stephen Westfall
Tom Doyle	Nancy Manter	Jeanne Wilkinson
Gabriele Evertz	Creighton Michael	Mark Williams
John Goodyear	Manfred Mohr	Thornton Willis
Gail Gregg	Corey Postiglione	Kes Zapkus
James Gross	Raquel Rabinovich	Nola Zirin
Lynne Harlow	Beatrice Riese*	

\* past member

This exhibition is a wonderful opportunity for American Abstract Artists to reach a global audience and, in so doing, to inform a broader public about the richness and breadth of abstract art made in the United States. I would like to thank Mr. Anthony Maddalena, Executive Director, Morgan Stanley Global Wealth Management and Ms. Jessica Gorman Taylor, Managing Director, Morgan Stanley International Headquarters for making this exhibition possible.

A special thanks is due to Creighton Michael for initiating the exhibition proposal. It is because of Creighton's generous spirit, his determination and plain hard work that this project has come to fruition. Quite simply, it would not have happened without him.

I would also like to thank Stephen Maine for his thought provoking essay; Sharon Brant for her design of all exhibit related graphics; Max Weintraub for moderating the panel discussion and Alice Adams, Christine Berry, Phillis Ideal, Stephen Maine and Stephen Westfall for serving as panelists; Emily Berger, Henry Brown and Mark Williams for assisting with the installation of work; the Berry Campbell Gallery, the Estate of Beatrice Riese, and Helen and Anne Silverstein for their loans of work by past members; and all AAA members who have lent their work for the exhibition.

Daniel G. Hill, President

**Cover:** Ed Ruda (1922-2014), *Untitled*, 1971, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 18 inches. Courtesy of Berry Campbell Gallery, New York City

