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# Painting Raging Nature and the Powerful Sublime Whitney Bedford in Profile



*Whitney Bedford, "The I do- I will," 2016. Ink and oil on canvas on panel, 60 × 96 inches*

Whitney Bedford's latest exhibition is a journey into a world of unexplored and suppressed emotions. The Los Angeles-based artist transforms reality with enigmatic imagery, masterfully weaving the raging elements of nature with the power of the sublime.

Her paintings—matte smooth surfaces scored with furious brush strokes—create autobiographical narratives with different textures and compositions. Her exquisite perception of color—bright backgrounds flecked with dark and gold inks—conjures the seductive atmosphere of shimmering moonlight skies, tropical deserts and reflections of earth and sea.

“I have no idea where they come from; they sort of just spring up like anthems,” she says of her titles, which read like poetry—“Tender is the Night,” “The Desert Dance Floor” and “The Wedding Party,” to name a few. Her last three shows, including “East of Eden,” have centered around the landscape. “In particular, the native succulent groves in and around Los Angeles, where I have lived now for many years and where my daughter was born,” she adds. “The color is taken from ideas about this strangely tropical desert by the sea. And the process is distinctly drawing-heavy, as I started these when I was pregnant and could not be sloshing around in a storm of paint as was my usual method. Instead I sought to root myself in my adopted land with mark-making.”

There is a serene smoothness in her compositions, but it is abruptly interrupted by swoops of paint crashing into the canvas. Waves rise and fall, stranded icebergs travel stormy seas, volcanoes erupt and burning firework flares light up the sky. In these atmospheric landscapes—some monumental and some small—nature's glory shines in all its fury, power and mystery. The artist's combination of ink and oil paint creates another dimension—a place in between bursts of paint that adds an explosive tension to the work. There, forces collide, raw energy flows and untamed emotions trigger a powerful release.



Whitney Bedford, "Tomorrowland," 2016. Ink and oil on canvas on panel, 60 × 96 inches

"I think the process of disaster is a reaction to my formal training as a painter," she says. "The deconstruction comes from a push and pull of making it my own." Between the sublime and the beautiful, qualities that she makes complementary in her dramatic compositions, Bedford finds herself at the intersection of pen, ink and details often lost in furious overpainting. But distinct horizon lines provide a sense balance even in the chaos.

She often describes her paintings as votives or conversations on which she projects her passions, fears and anxieties. "They are all related. Even if I can't recognize it right away," she says. "Nothing ever escapes the autobiographical." Exploring the emotional potential of the landscape, Bedford's work is about balancing extremes and celebrating contradictions. When asked which part is stronger, she witfully replies: "Aren't they the same thing?" (Vasia Rigou)

*Whitney Bedford's "East Of Eden" shows through June 25 at Carrie Secrist Gallery, 835 West Washington.*

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