



Cape Cod Museum of Art

# Swept Away:

Translucence, Transparency, Transcendence  
in Contemporary Encaustic

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Cape Cod Museum of Art  
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*Swept Away: Translucence, Transparence, Transcendence*  
*in Contemporary Encaustic*, curated by Michael A. Giaquinto  
Cape Cod Museum of Art  
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*Curator's Foreword* © Michael A. Giaquinto  
*Essay, Extravagant Light* © Joanne Mattera

Designed by Linda Cordner and Jane Guthridge

Cover:  
Karen Freedman  
*Ruche 0352.55*, 2012  
encaustic on panel  
12" x 12" x 1.5"

**Tracey Adams** (14)  
**Lynn Basa** (40)  
**Dawna Bemis** (36)  
**Michael Billie** (37)  
**Binnie Birstein** (21)  
**Anne Cavanaugh** (38)  
**Cecile Chong** (31)  
**David A. Clark** (12)  
**Linda Cordner** (30)  
**Elena De La Ville** (19)  
**Lorrie Fredette** (27)  
**Karen Freedman** (39)  
**Milisa Galazzi** (26)  
**Lorraine Glessner** (15)  
**Jane Guthridge** (17)  
**Howard Hersh** (32)  
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**Nancy Natale** (13)  
**Jane Allen Nodine** (42)  
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**Lynda Ray** (28)  
**Paula Roland** (16)  
**Marybeth Rothman** (18)  
**Toby Sisson** (24)  
**Donna Hamil Talman** (35)  
**Elise Wagner** (23)  
**Gregory Wright** (41)

( ) denotes page number

**“Like the light itself,  
we move visually in and out of  
the layers of wax and pigment,  
encouraged to look more.”**

## **Curator’s Foreword**

It is hugely refreshing to encounter a medium as free, vibrant, engrossing and absorbing as encaustic.

Though demanding technically, encaustic or hot wax painting can be used to create complex works of art. One attraction of this medium is its dimensional appearance. Another is its extraordinary color and luminosity. Every surface warrants a closer look.

The artists who are represented in *Swept Away* are in no way shy about using this medium to its fullest. There are paintings, prints, even sculptural works. They have surprised me, using wax in ways I have not expected. I have to think twice about what I am looking at: the depth of the layers and the light that comes to the surface, the texture and the dimension on the surface itself. All of it is a welcome change from conventional studio painting.

This collection of work, with its extraordinary range of expression, is a model of what is possible in encaustic. We may be seduced by color or intrigued by an achromatic palette, drawn in by visual tensions that make us want more. As we visually separate the image from the material, we realize all that is contained on the surface and below the surface. It grabs us and pulls us in. Like the light itself, we move in and out of the layers of wax and pigment only to be encouraged to look more. The materials and techniques we see here are but a small portion of the limitless possibilities open to artists in working with encaustic.

Encaustic was notably used in the Fayum mummy portraits from Greco-Roman Egypt around 100 B.C. to 200 A.D. Contemporary encaustic was championed by Jasper Johns; in the 1950’s he fully embraced the use of wax in his art, thereby opening the door for its use in the 21st Century. Two thousand years of history have inspired the passion of many artists; for others encaustic is a “new” medium which provides the most effective means of expressing ideas.

It was a pleasure to work with such a fine group of artists who are truly committed to this medium.

Thank you to Joanne Mattera and Cherie Mittenthal for encouraging me to seek out the best in encaustic painting, not just on Cape Cod but around the country.

— Michael A. Giaquinto,  
*Curator of Exhibitions, Cape Cod Museum of Art*

## Extravagant Light

Like all paints, encaustic consists of finely ground pigments suspended in a medium. With oil paint, that medium is linseed oil. With acrylic, it's plastic polymer. With encaustic, it's beeswax.

While there are many material qualities to encaustic—texture, malleability, even aroma—the most salient is the way it interacts with light. Entering the translucent surface of a wax painting, light reflects against the gessoed ground, refracting slightly so that it emanates as a soft glow. In and of itself, refractive luminosity is not unique to encaustic; Rembrandt was a master of the oil glaze, employing its pigmented viscosity to capture light and return its refulgence to the eye of the viewer. But the substantive nature of wax allows it to do something that other mediums, even Rembrandt's glazes, do not. Optically deeper than its actual thickness, wax seems to hold the light before releasing it. Is this a possibility of physics? Probably not, but to look at a painting in this medium is to experience the sensation of light suspended.

*Swept Away: Translucence, Transparence, Transcendence in Contemporary Encaustic* considers the extravagance of light. Thirty-one artists from around the United States, each a master of the medium, exploit this quality by various means: painting, of course, as well as collage, printmaking and sculpture. In Michael A. Giaquinto's beautiful installation, within a gallery illuminated largely by a skylight, everything about this particular aspect of encaustic is amplified.

**DRAWN TO THE LIGHT:** *Linda Cordner, Cherie Mittenenthal, Lisa Pressman, Jane Guthridge, Paula Roland*

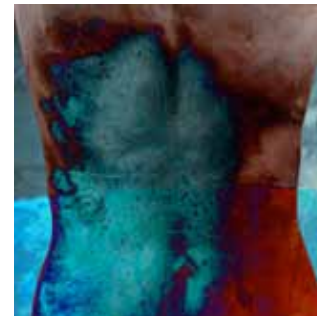
Cordner's vignетted landscapes, reduced to their essence of earth, water and sky, are suffused with a Turner-esque radiance. Mittenenthal is a master of mutable atmosphere, recording the ever-changing sky and tides viewed from her Provincetown studio. Pressman plies marks on successive layers of beeswax to create paintings that appear to channel illumination from a source deep within the work. Guthridge and Roland do channel that source. Both artists work in encaustic monotype—printing with wax paint on a heated metal plate—which transparentizes the paper so that it assumes the brilliance of stained glass. Guthridge's chromatic auras burn with radiance, while Roland's dreamy abstractions are actually illuminated from behind.



Jane Guthridge  
*The Space Between 22 (detail)*,  
2012, encaustic and archival  
inkjet on translucent Asian  
papers, 23" x 23"



Gregory Wright  
*Searching for Sanctuary*, 2009  
encaustic, oil, pigment, shellac  
on birch, 30" x 24"



Elena De La Ville  
*Torso/Leaf*, 2012  
encaustic, 24" x 24"



Marybeth Rothman  
*Eugene*, 2012  
photo collage, encaustic and  
mixed media, 40" x 40"

**THE UNIVERSE, LARGE AND SMALL:** *Catherine Nash, Sara Mast, Elise Wagner, Gregory Wright, Donna Hamil Talman*

Mast gazes up at the night sky from her home in Montana and sees the universe. Wagner imagines it from a scientific point of view. Both artists employ layers of markings, built up or scraped back, to make tangible the idea of the cosmos. Contemplating its infinity, Nash expresses metaphorically our place within it. Connecting the cosmos to the cellular, Wright takes us on a "fantastic voyage" paint drop by paint drop, while Talman, inspired by "the human vessel," expresses in line and hue the universe within.

**TRANSFORMATION:** *Anne Cavanaugh, Lorraine Glessner, Elena De La Ville, Tracey Adams*

As it happens, the four artists most drawn to change and transformation work in collage. Perhaps it is because in collage, wax functions as a lens through which to view a visual history of image and mark. Cavanaugh transforms petals and leaves into mosaic-like designs with succulent transparency and mathematical complexity. Glessner's layers of lace and rust overlaid with ornamental pattern reflect on life cycles and historical change. Through photographic fragments of the human form, which she layers with wax and rust, De La Ville scrapes back into the wax skin, revealing a body that bears the scars of a lifetime. And in her intimate gestural collages, Adams explores the intersection of the natural world with the compositional principles she learned as a musician, specifically the process of chance.

**NARRATIVE:** *Cecile Chong, Marybeth Rothman, Michael Billie*  
Chong, born in South America to Chinese parents and now living in the United States, addresses the issues of identity and cultural assimilation through drawn figures set into wistful landscapes, the artist's idiosyncratic merging of East and West. Rothman digitally alters found photographs of strangers, painting them with a veil of wax onto which she imposes swipes of color; her hues, faded like old wallpaper or chromatically wild, reflect the biographies she has created for them. Billie's paintings may be less obviously narrative but they are rooted in his own history; the Navajo patterns he scribes into the surface are drawn from the rug purses his mother wove when he was a child.



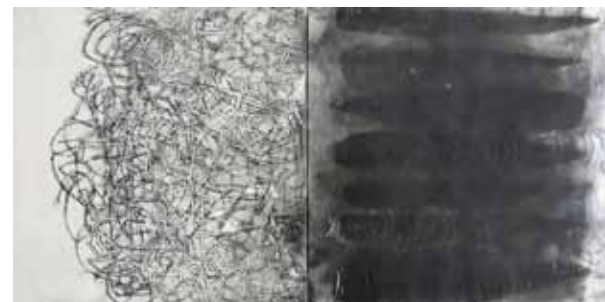
Howard Hersh  
*Pulse (4)*, 2012  
 encaustic on panels, 13" x 15"

**LUMINOUS GEOMETRY:** *Karen Freedman, Dawna Bemis, Nancy Natale, Lorrie Fredette; Lynda Ray, Joanne Mattera, Howard Hersh, David A. Clark* Freedman creates kaleidoscopic paintings with a rigorous concentric geometry that is softened to lusciousness by successive layers of image. Bemis and Natale aggregate components with and into wax—computer electronics and cut-up book parts, respectively—affixed by techniques of their own devising. Bemis’s work has the ethereal grace of a mandala; Natale’s, the defiant solidity of a target. Fredette halves the circle, multiplies it, cuts a pattern into wax-stiffened fabric, and assembles each translucent slice into a column of variable height, light creating a dialog with the form and its shadows.

In Ray’s optically demanding painting, a “pleated” plane rises and falls crisply, transparency suggested by the imposition of five intersecting shapes that appear to float above it. Hersh plays with the plane by letting us slip visually into the shallow space behind a scrim of color, while varying depths of the geometric components, which comprise the shape of the painting, bring it into full relief. Mattera’s field of diamonds offers transparencies half-hidden; you want to scratch the surface to get at more (but don’t!). Clark, who is represented by an impressive monotype grid, wrests every bit of variation possible from the arrow, to him a joyous motif reflective of “a leap into the unknown.”

**GESTURE:** *Toby Sisson, Binnie Birstein, Milisa Galazzi*

Sisson is a master of shadow and light, simultaneously obscuring and revealing both gesture and shape with an extraordinarily subtle hand, but it is those smoky tangles that hold the mystery. Birstein’s broad-brushed gestures and chromatic exuberance might fly off the painting were it not for the grid she scribes into the surface like a safety net. Galazzi’s gestures are *punti in aria*, though materially they are stitches on paper, which has been cut to follow the trail of the thread. Immersed in wax, the transparentized paper is hung away from the wall and casts vibrating shadows as it wafts gently.



Toby Sisson  
*A Coded Language*, 2011  
 encaustic, 16" x 32"

**THE POWER OF HEAT:** *Jane Allen Nodine, Lynn Basa, Laura Moriarty* A technical feature of encaustic is that the wax must be heated to be applied. Keeping the paint molten, the artist works swiftly to charge the brush and place the stroke, whether it be a quick daub or a gestural swipe. Each layer or group of brush strokes must be fused with a heating tool so that the surface, comprised of discrete compositional elements, is structurally unified. Wax can also be poured and cast. Given that heat is so essential to the process of working in encaustic, in this last grouping we look at the work of three artists who engage heat in diverse ways. This is not to focus on technique per se but to acknowledge that without it, ideas remain in the melting pot.

Nodine creates layers of cellular networks, inviting the viewer to make a visual excavation through and into the surface. Would it surprise you to know that a careful burn of shellac on the surface has yielded those exquisite patterns? Basa gives new meaning to the term *color field*; using a heat gun as a brush, she releases flower-like explosions of color from under the surface, finessing chance and control. Moriarty’s geologic formations in wax are compact and heavy, but she counterpoints their density against the translucence of the stratified prints behind them—monotypes that were made directly from the sculptures themselves. The artist pressed those sculptures onto a hot metal plate to define their form and then kissed the paper to the paint remaining on the plate.



Laura Moriarty  
 (installation detail)  
*Volcanic Mountain Thin Section*, 2012, encaustic monotype on kozo paper, 60" x 42"  
*Volcanic Mountain*, 2012, encaustic sculpture, 9" x 12" x 2.5"

Taken together these three artists exemplify the balance of concept and process in studio practice.

We close with deep gratitude to Michael A. Giaquinto, curator of exhibitions, who selected a splendid show, and Cindy Nickerson, the museum’s interim executive director, who opened the institution to us. We thank all the artists who participated in this exhibition and in the production of this catalog, reserving particular appreciation for our designers, Linda Corder and Jane Guthridge.

— Joanne Mattera,  
 Founder and Director, *The International Encaustic Conference*

— Cherie Mittenthal,  
 Executive Director, *Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill*

# David A. Clark

www.davidaclark.com

*Color Up*, 16 encaustic monoprints on Rives Lightweight, 2012, 108" x 84" x 2"



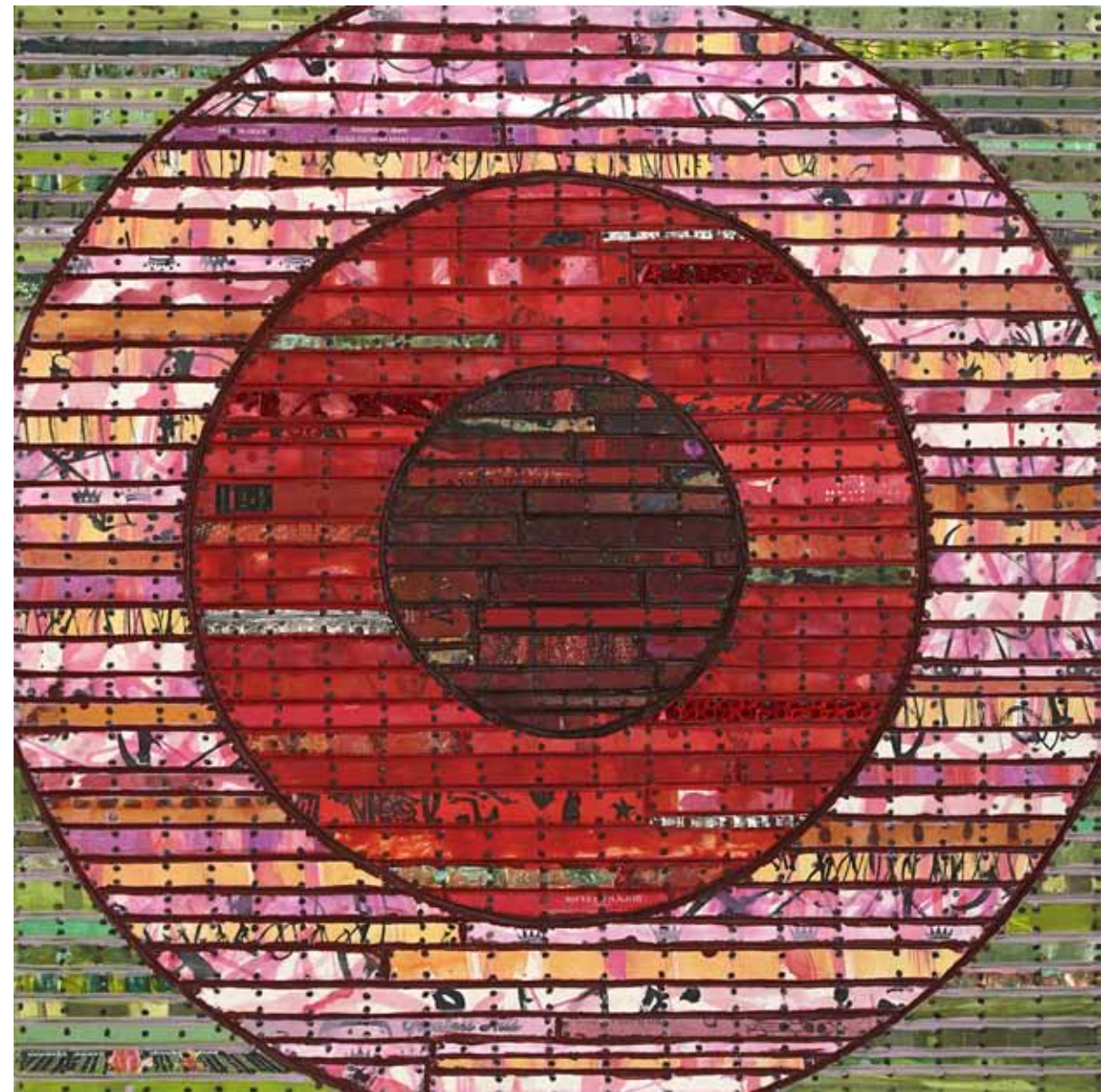
# Nancy Natale

www.nancynatale.net

*Rouge*, mixed media with encaustic, 2012, 36" x 36"

Courtesy of Arden Gallery, Boston, MA

Photo: John Polak Photography



## Tracey Adams

[www.traceyadamsart.com](http://www.traceyadamsart.com)

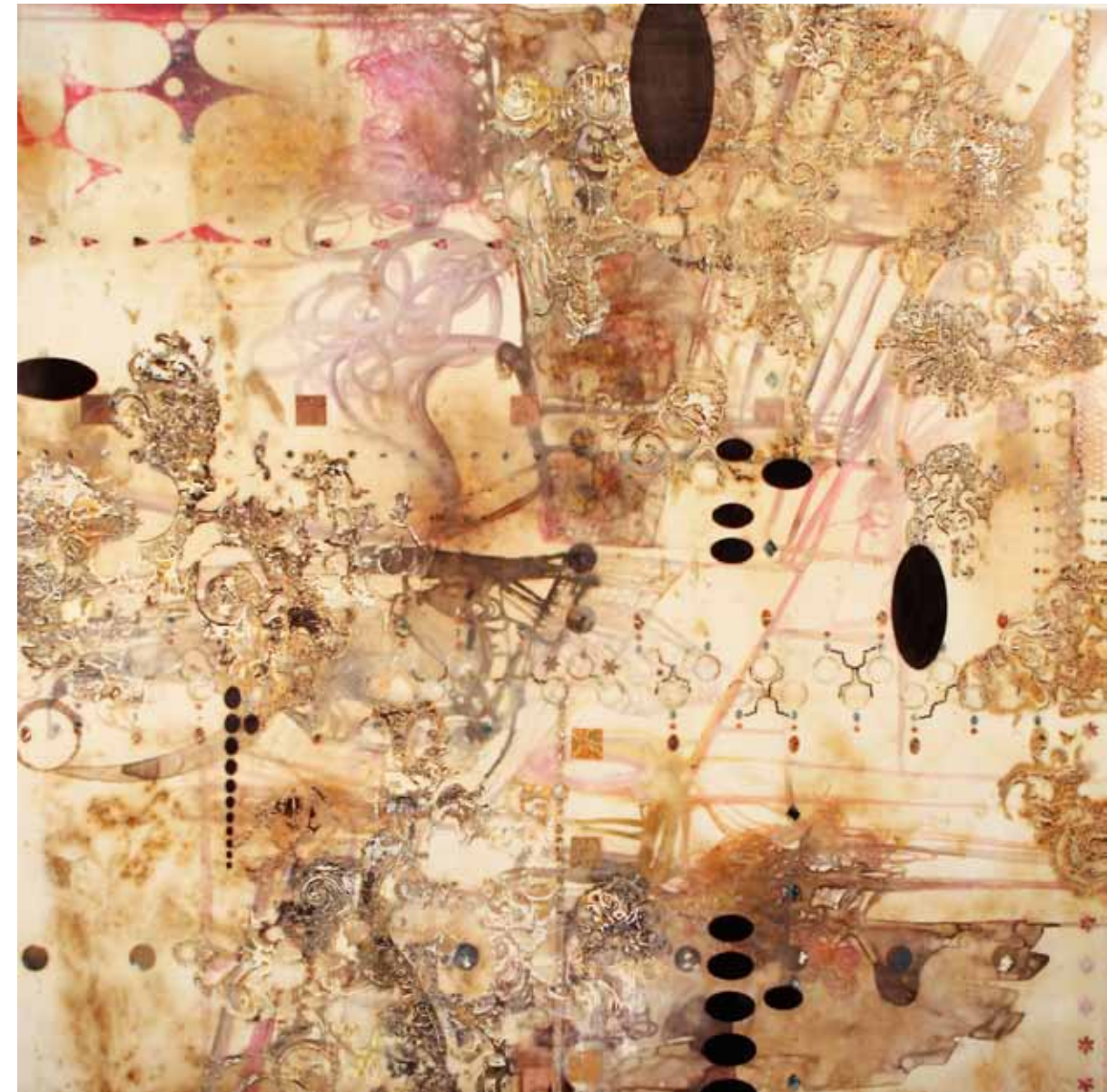
*Radicato series 6, 8, 13*, encaustic monotype, drypoint, encaustic, 2011, three panels 8" x 8" each



## Lorraine Glessner

[www.lorraineglessner.net](http://www.lorraineglessner.net)

*The Crying Chandelier*, encaustic, horse and human hair, mixed media on rusted and branded silk on wood, 2012, 36" x 36" x 1.5"





## Paula Roland

[www.paularoland.com](http://www.paularoland.com)

*Palm*, Encaustic monotype on Rives paper with fluorescent illumination, 2012, 42" x 20"

*Field*, Encaustic monotype on Rives paper with fluorescent illumination, 2012, 42" x 20"

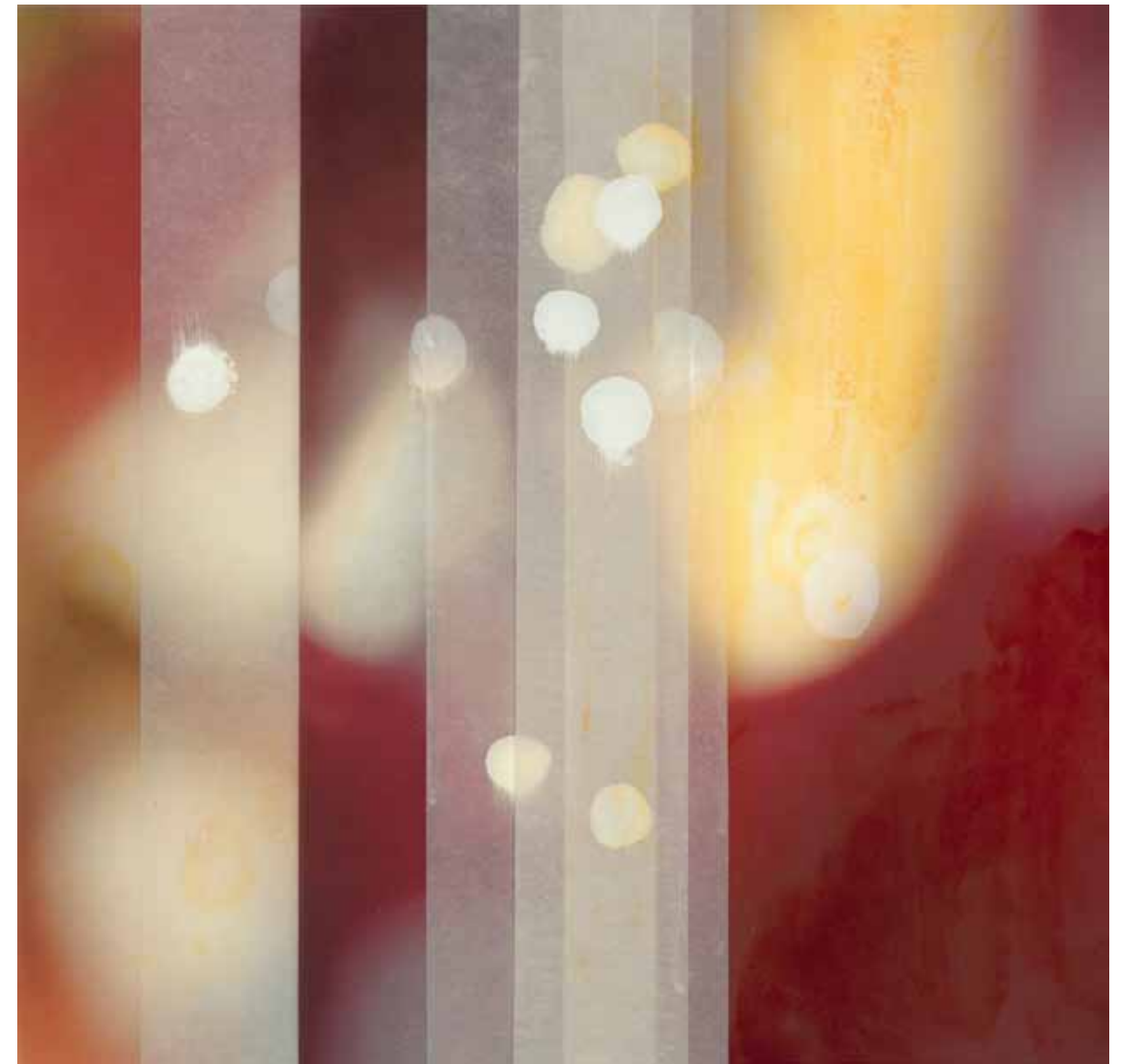
Courtesy of William Siegal Gallery, Santa Fe, NM



## Jane Guthridge

[www.janeguthridge.com](http://www.janeguthridge.com)

*The Space Between 22*, encaustic and archival inkjet on translucent Asian papers, 2012, 23" x 23"



## Marybeth Rothman

[www.marybethrothman.com](http://www.marybethrothman.com)

*Sylvie*, photo collage, encaustic and mixed media, 2012, 40" x 40"

Courtesy of Lanoue Fine Art, Boston, MA



## Elena De La Ville

[www.edelaville.com](http://www.edelaville.com)

*Torso/Clouds*, encaustic, 2012, 24" x 24"



## Lisa Pressman

[www.lisapressman.net](http://www.lisapressman.net)

*Transparent Thinking*, encaustic, paper, ink on board, 2011, 24" x 24"



## Binnie Birstein

[www.binniebirstein.com](http://www.binniebirstein.com)

*What Lies Beneath: Pool*, encaustic on panel with india ink, graphite and oilstick, 2012, 48" x 36"



## Catherine Nash

[www.catherinenash.com](http://www.catherinenash.com)

*Infinite Growth*, encaustic painting on wood panel, oil stick, antique square, 2012, 39" x 39"



## Elise Wagner

[www.elisewagner.com](http://www.elisewagner.com)

*Remnant III*, Encaustic and oil on panel, 2011, 48" x 24"

Courtesy of Chase Young Gallery, Boston, MA

Photo: Rebekah Johnson



## Toby Sisson

[www.tobysisson.com](http://www.tobysisson.com)

*Submerge IV*, encaustic, 2012, 12" x 12"

*A Coded Language*, encaustic, 2011, 16" x 32"



## Cherie Mittenenthal

[www.cheriemittenthal.com](http://www.cheriemittenthal.com)

*Weather*, encaustic, pigment stick, marble dust, 2013, 16" x 16"

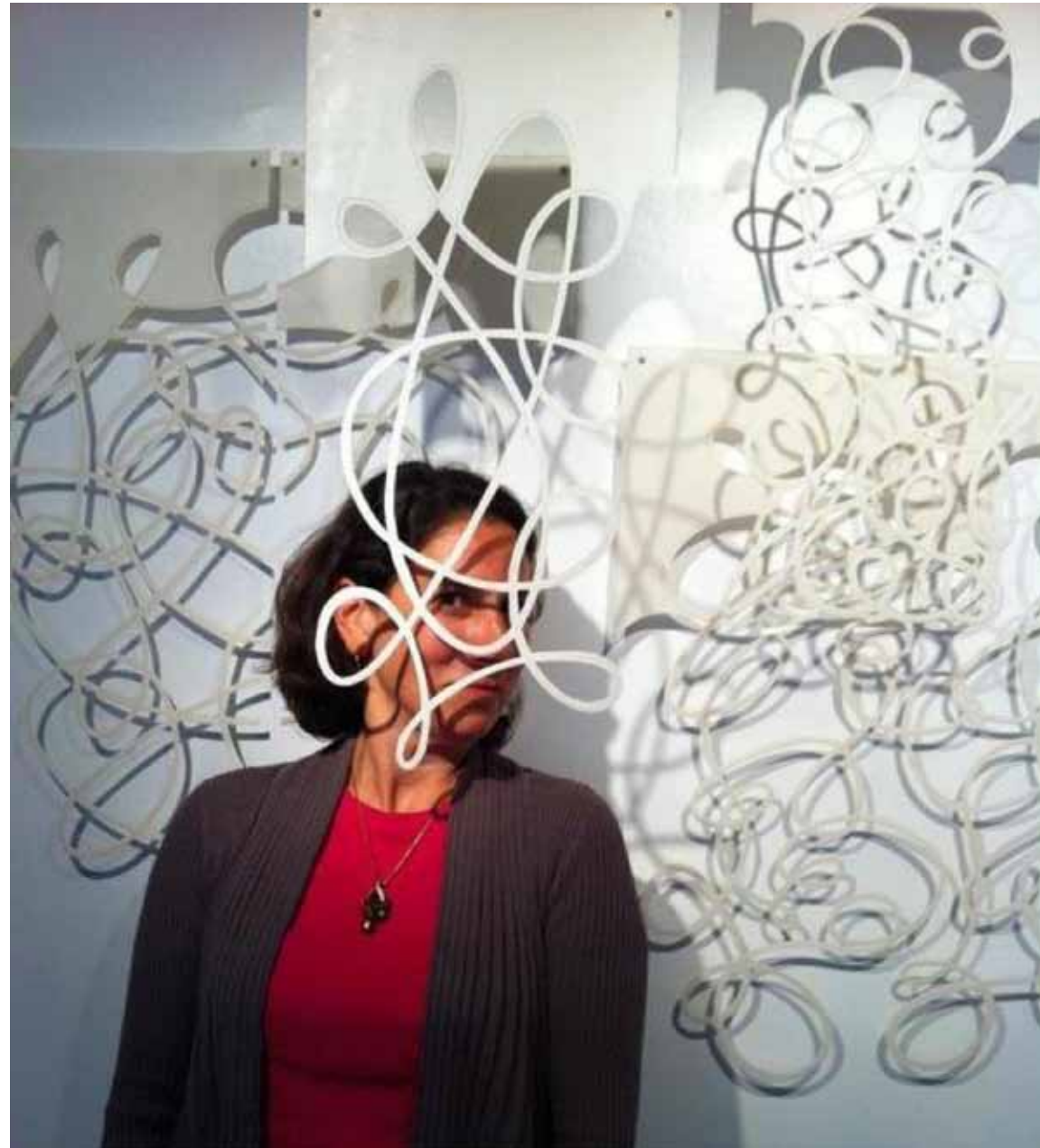
*Storm Approaching*, encaustic, pigment stick, marble dust, 2013, 16" x 16"



## Milisa Galazzi

[www.milisagalazzi.com](http://www.milisagalazzi.com)

*Waggle Dance* (installation), thread, paper, wax, 2013, 48" x 20"



## Lorrie Fredette

[www.lorriefredette.com](http://www.lorriefredette.com)

*Pores*, beeswax, tree resin, fabric stiffener, 2012, 58" x 6" x 3"

Photo: Jay Rosenblatt



**Lynda Ray**

[www.lyndarayart.com](http://www.lyndarayart.com)

*Fracture*, encaustic on panel, 2012, 36" x 48"



**Joanne Mattera**

[www.joannemattera.com](http://www.joannemattera.com)

*Rummu*, encaustic on panel, 2011, 32" x 32"

Courtesy of Arden Gallery, Boston, MA



## Linda Cordner

[www.lindacordner.com](http://www.lindacordner.com)

*Teal Dusk*, encaustic on board, 2010, 18" x 12"



## Cecile Chong

[www.cecilechong.com](http://www.cecilechong.com)

*Fire-Fuego-Fo*, encaustic and mixed media on panel, 2012, 26" x 12"

*Monkey-Mono-MaLau*, encaustic and mixed media on panel, 2012, 26" x 12"





## Howard Hersh

[www.howardhersh.com](http://www.howardhersh.com)

*Pulse (2)*, encaustic on panels, 2012, 19" x 13"



## Laura Moriarty

[www.lauramoriarty.com](http://www.lauramoriarty.com)

*Volcanic Mountain Thin Section*, encaustic monotype on kozo paper, 2012, 60" x 42"

*Volcanic Mountain*, encaustic sculpture, 2012, 9" x 12" x 2.5"

Photo: Katie Lobel



## Sara Mast

[www.saramast.com](http://www.saramast.com)

*Between Stars*, encaustic on paper mounted on panel, 22" x 30", 2011

*Signal Cell*, encaustic on paper mounted on panel, 11.5" x 15", 2011



## Donna Hamil Talman

[www.donnamitalman.com](http://www.donnamitalman.com)

*Evolving*, mixed media on paper, 2012, 38" x 26.5"

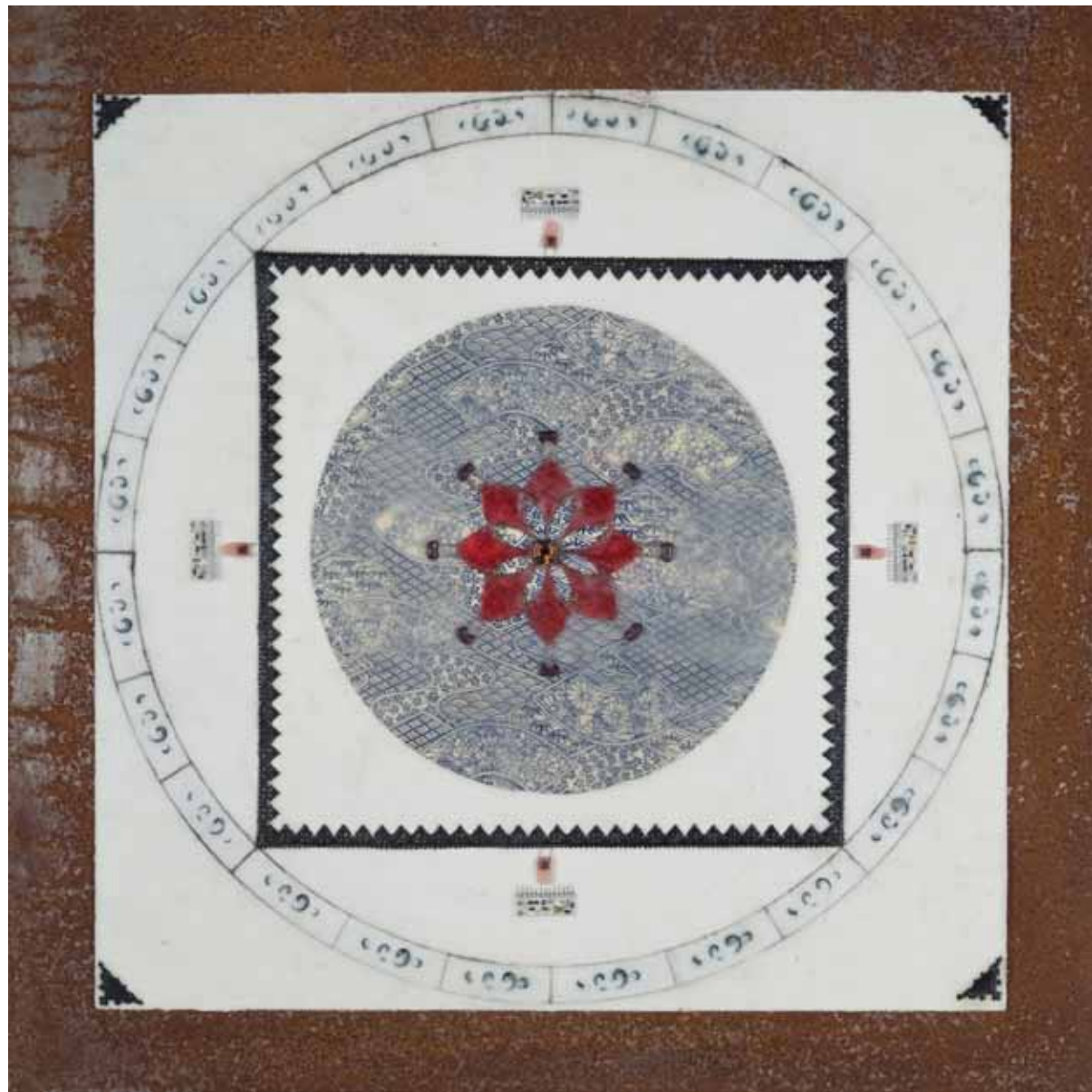


## Dawna Bemis

[www.dawnabemis.com](http://www.dawnabemis.com)

*Fire Mandala 4*, encaustic, paper, pigment, transistors and pigment stick on steel, 2012, 24" x 24"

Photo: Jay York



## Michael Billie

[www.michaelbillie.com](http://www.michaelbillie.com)

*The Long Walk No. 11*, wax, eco-print and branded paper on panel, 2012, 32" x 12" x 1.5"

*Navajo Rug No. 11*, wax and rusted paper on panel, 2012, 36" x 12" x 1.5"



## Anne Cavanaugh

[www.annecavanaugh.com](http://www.annecavanaugh.com)

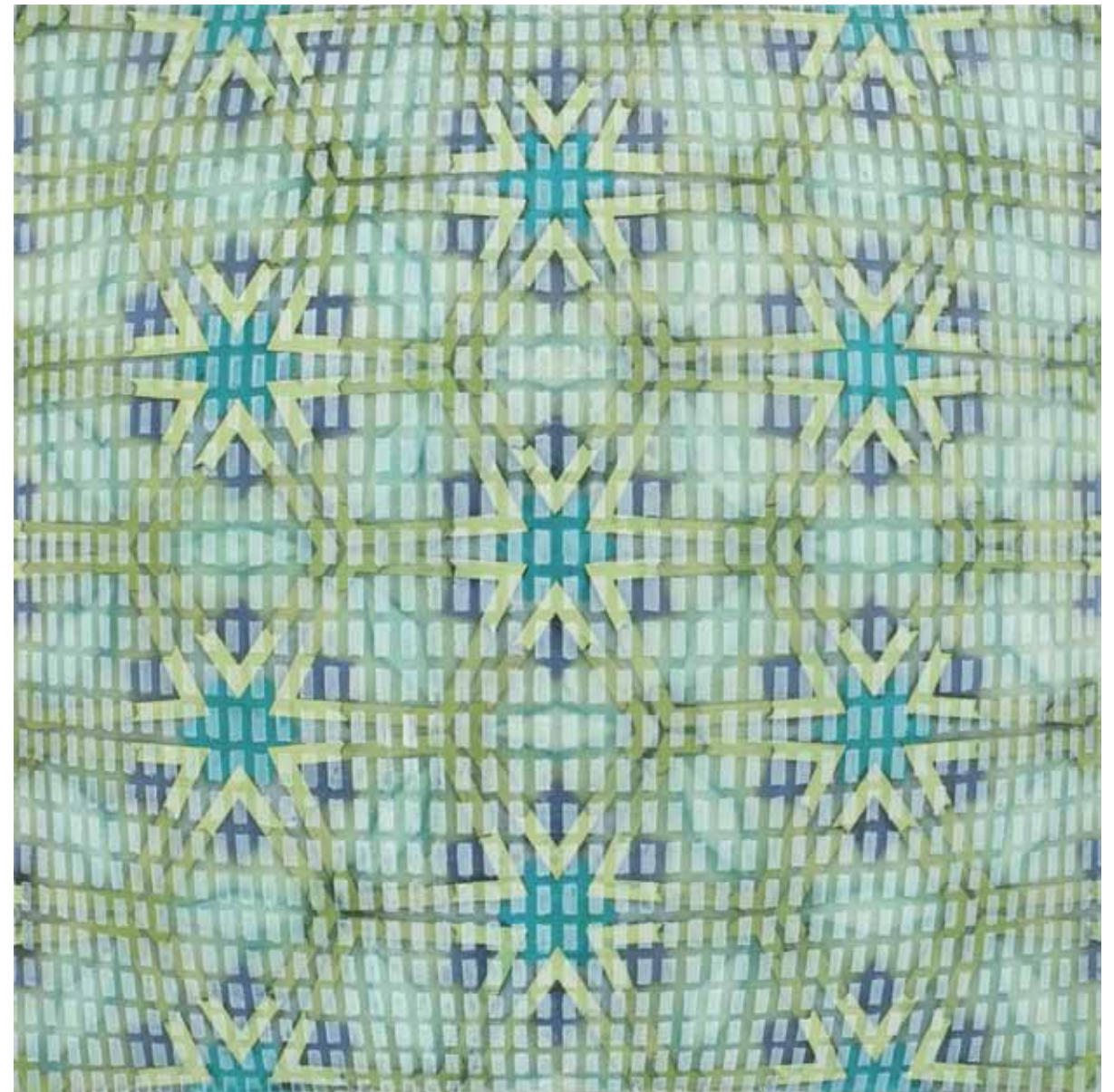
*Peltae*, dried ginkgo leaves, inkberry leaves and berries, pine needles, flower petals, thread and encaustic on maple panel, 2011, 15" x 26"



## Karen Freedman

[www.karenfreedman.com](http://www.karenfreedman.com)

*Ruche 0391.1*, encaustic on panel, 2011, 12" x 12" x 1.5"

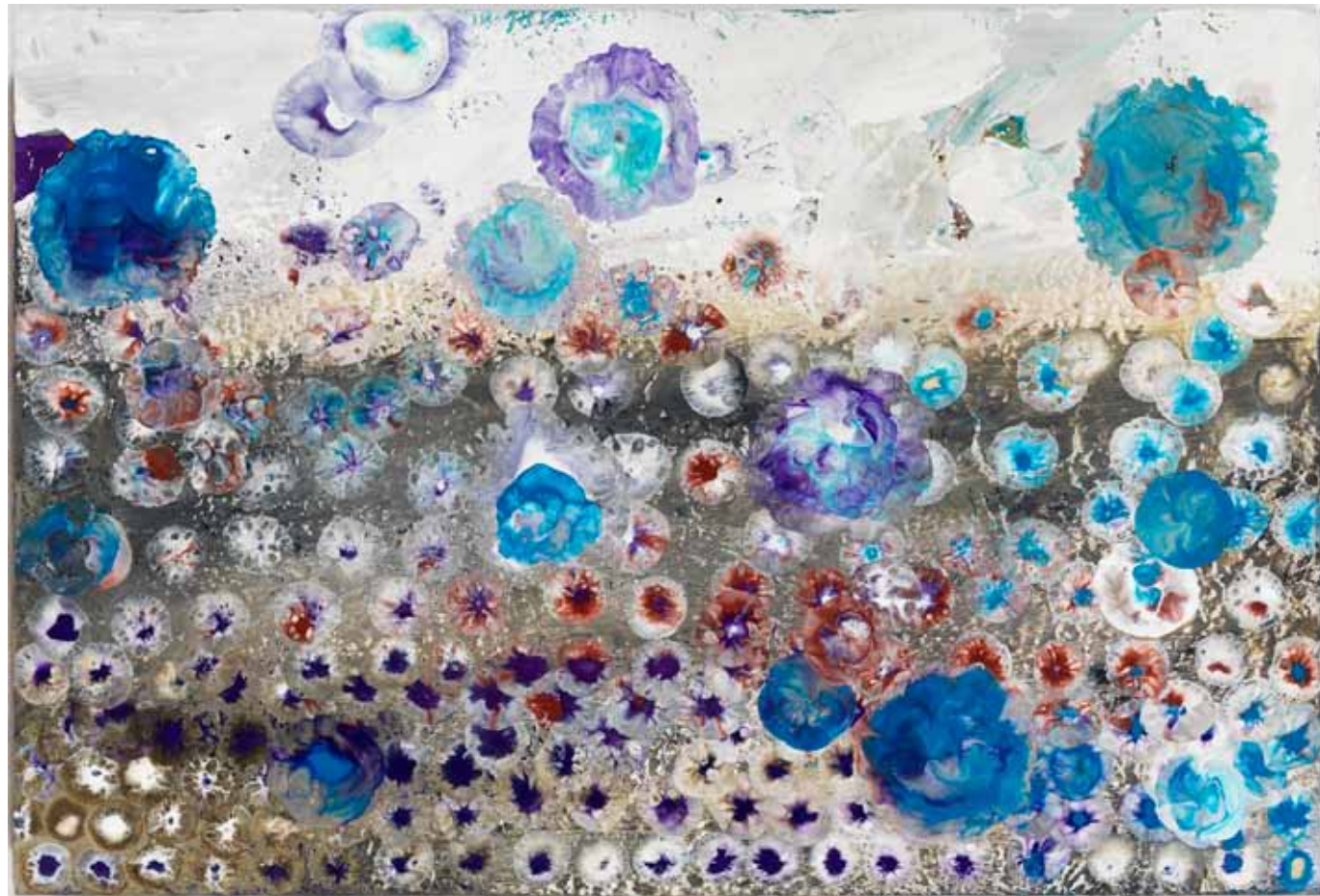


## Lynn Basa

[www.lynnbasa.com](http://www.lynnbasa.com)

Pansy Riot, oil and beeswax on panel, 2012, 24" x 36"

Photo: Tom van Eynde



## Gregory Wright

[www.artgw.com](http://www.artgw.com)

*Effervescent Ascension*, encaustic, oil, pigment, shellac on birch, 2009, 36" x 30"



# Jane Allen Nodine

[www.janenodine.com](http://www.janenodine.com)

*Venetian Lace 19*, encaustic, oil pigment, resin, iron oxidation on panel, 2011, 30" x 20"



