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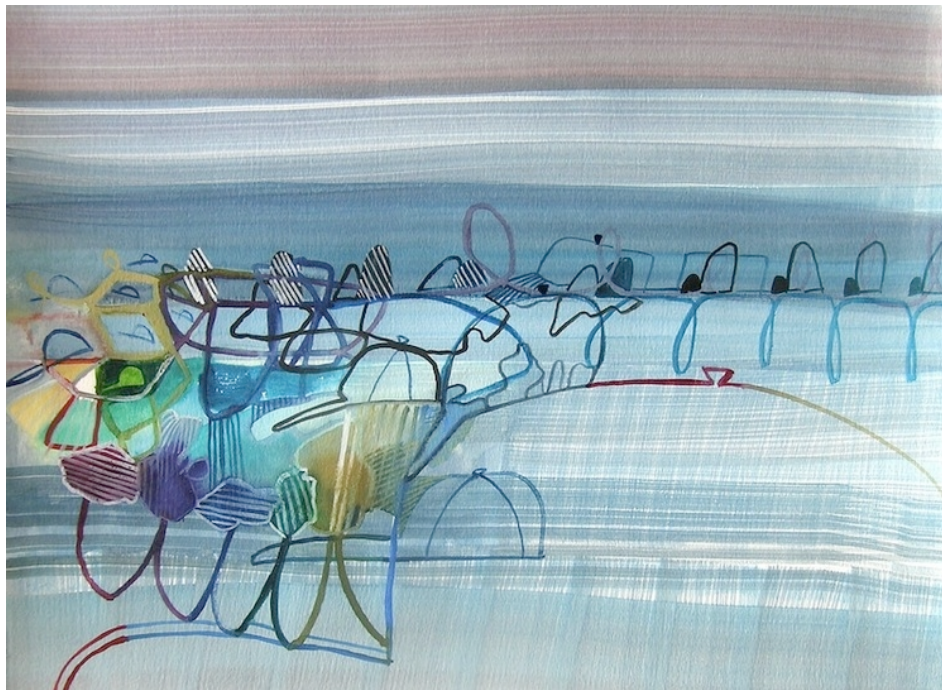


BRIC Blog

Featured Artist: Josette Urso

Posted by [BRIC Art Blogger](#) on August 8, 2014 at 3:25 am

Periodically, we review artist profiles on the BRIC Contemporary Artist Registry and select one of exceptional merit to feature.



Josette Urso, *Cadaques Blue Cap*, 2010

Multidisciplinary artist Josette Urso talked with BRIC about her work in and outside of the studio and about living in Brooklyn. For over two decades, Urso has moved between collage, painting, and drawing with ease. She has created paintings of meandering landscapes and cityscapes, responding immediately to her surroundings and turning that perception into color-filled abstractions. Urso has widely exhibited across the country and has had residencies and grants from around the world, including Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, NY; Cadaques, Spain; Taiwan; Germany; and France.

Can you begin by talking about your art making process?

J.U.: I work urgently and always in direct response to my immediate environment. I am simultaneously involved with multiple projects: painting, drawing and collage. For me, working itself generates ideas. I approach my process intuitively and all of my work starts with a simple impulse.

How do you work across different mediums?

J.U.: I think differently with different mediums and yet I move fluidly from one medium to the next. The interrelationship between painting, drawing and collage and the collaboration between process and concept encourages the creation of less planned and more unexpected images.

I find that drawing parallels the act of seeing and is the most direct link to private time with the physical world. There is a delicate threshold between seeing and knowing. It is part

conceptual and part sensual. I am consistently freer with my painting after spending time drawing: ink cannot be erased while paint can be wiped and reworked. The intensity of my drawing approach and faith in the process really helps my paintings. Also the collision of imagery discovered with collage expands the way I see and the way I paint.

How do you think of time and timing in relation to your work?

J.U.: Time and timing are mysterious. During a thoroughly engaged working session, time becomes absorbed, condensed and expanded simultaneously. I think I give the same consideration to time as I do to space and participate minute-by-minute and inch-by-inch. Minutes become years and inches become miles. Yet, the minutes, inches, years and miles are not necessarily sequential and I often find myself engaged in every increment and direction simultaneously.

I am also interested in the intervals between the minutes, inches, years and miles and how time is fragmented by events. Noticing a symmetry or synchronicity with time like when the clock reads 1:01 or 12:12 or 3:23 or 4:44 always seems completely significant. It creates a pause or punctuates or clarifies a particular moment.

Timing plays a different role in different work. Painting has a momentum and it is always a challenge to find a stopping point. I never take up where I left off and instead start over completely in each painting session. Drawing is slower and more deliberate and I change locations on the page to keep my vision fresh. Somehow it all adds up. Collage is more relaxed and open-ended and I meander among the elements. There are many possible stopping and starting points.

Do you see your paintings as an examination of early modernist paintings? How do you insert yourself into that history?

J.U.: Over the years, some of the artists I have consistently admired are Charles Burchfield, Marsden Hartley, Arthur Dove, Helen Torr and George Bellows. Each had a particularly intimate relationship with the landscape and the materiality of paint and each responded intuitively to his or her immediate surroundings. Their investigations ranged from the literal to the abstract, and they were not thinking about nature in a pastoral or picturesque way but rather with an eye to the forces or essences of the natural world. Philip Guston is another artist I have greatly admired especially because of his attitude of urgency.

You have spoken about your ambivalence towards the quantity and speed of information, what do you think is the role of artists in the digital age?

J.U.: In my work, I comment on the "live" qualities of experience – that of receiving endless amounts of information from every possible direction. Yet, there is a delicate balance between flow and overflow. I am constantly balancing opposites. I am as addicted to maximum stimuli as I am obsessed with the problem of information. Complexity and accumulation argue with streamlining and letting go.

I think the artist's job is to serve as a filter. Technology is a great tool for many artists and their work though I definitely tend toward the analog. In order to participate and engage with my immediate surroundings it is essential that I regularly unplug.

Given that you find inspiration for your work in the landscape, how has living in Brooklyn impacted your work?

J.U.: In 2005, I moved into a studio in Brooklyn that has large windows and a wide open city view. As a result, in addition to making larger paintings, my work has become more influenced by weather, particularly at its most extreme. The spaces in my paintings are also beginning to include inside/outside and near/far. Currently, I am experimenting with manipulating the view by hanging small constructions on either side of the glass windows and exploring the "space-in-between".

Featured Artist selected by Gail Erickson

Interview compiled by Ayelen Pagnanelli

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