
Ends with Beginnings: Gabe Brown in the Studio

August 23, 2019 by [Karlyn Benson](https://wsworkshop.org/author/karlyn-benson/) (<https://wsworkshop.org/author/karlyn-benson/>)



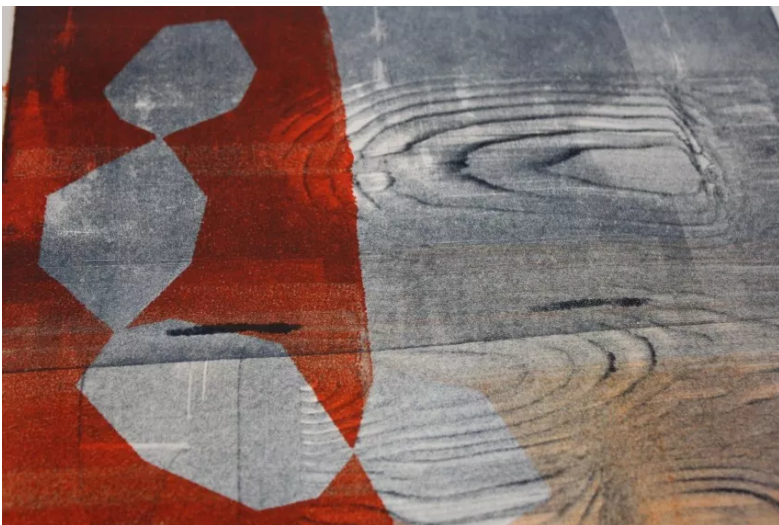
Gabe Brown combines geometric and organic forms to create abstract landscapes. She searches for meaning in the unknown, imagining what reality beyond our tangible experience might look like. Her diverse influences include the early Renaissance painter Giotto, Mughal painting from the 16th-18th centuries, and Japanese woodcuts. For Brown, the common thread in this work is the depiction of the human condition through a highly stylized representation of narrative and the use of compressed space. The essence of her work is a push and pull between flatness and depth, light and dark, and abstraction and nature. Her imagery is dreamlike and slightly subversive, and can be seen as an interior landscape, an alternate universe, or a self portrait.



Brown's residency at the Women's Studio Workshop gave her the opportunity to work in a new medium – printmaking. After decades of painting and drawing, she initially struggled with this unfamiliar process. In her paintings and drawings she adds layers of color, shapes, and imagery over time. The beauty of Brown's work is that it appears effortless, but in fact, it takes days, weeks, and even months to finish one piece. Printmaking is more unpredictable, and it is harder to go back and rework something with precision. After some experimentation at the beginning of her residency, Brown realized that she had to find a different approach. She used a collaging process to create monoprints with paper stencils based on imagery from her paintings. By creating a register for each print she could run it through the press multiple times with different images and colors. In this way she could work with the elements she wanted, while keeping up with the faster pace of printmaking. Initially Brown was not sure of what would happen, but as the prints began to take shape she was happy with the results.



The most important aspect of Brown's residency at WSW was that she was allowed to experiment, and she's grateful for the guidance of the patient and experienced staff. She didn't have to worry about the end result, so she felt more comfortable learning something new. For Brown, the act of making prints was as important as the finished work. One print informed another, and her goal was to keep things moving along. She didn't want to feel pressured by the need to finish something. Brown realized that this method of working is exactly how she draws and paints. She starts several pieces around the same time, moving from one to the other while adding elements to different paintings and drawings simultaneously.



Brown left the residency with dozens of prints in process, which she plans to finish at WSW's studio this fall. She commented that if this were earlier in her career she might have worried that she had not accomplished what she set out to do; however, she sees it very differently as a mid-career artist. The opportunity to try something new was incredibly liberating and will no doubt influence her paintings and drawings. For Brown, her art practice is a way to deal with the many possibilities that we face in life. Accordingly, she imbues her work with a sense of the wonder she experiences as she considers the enormous complexity of the world. She will use what she learned at WSW in the months to come, inspired to push herself into new creative territory.



Karlyn Benson was the owner/director of Matteawan Gallery in Beacon, NY from 2013 to 2018. In 2019 she launched [Karlyn Benson Creative Consulting](https://www.kbcreativeconsulting.com/) (<https://www.kbcreativeconsulting.com/>), to assist artists with writing, administrative tasks, and marketing. She is currently on the Board of Directors of BeaconArts where she serves as Co-President. Prior to Matteawan Gallery, Karlyn worked in the Registrar Department at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. She received an MA in Art History from the University of Texas, Austin and a BA in Art History from SUNY Purchase. She is passionate about contemporary art and a frequent visitor to museums and galleries. She has lived in the Hudson Valley since 2003.

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