

Los Angeles Times

Pagel, David. "Review: Laurie Nye paints her way to Venus. You can join the ride," *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 2018.



Laurie Nye
"Ecology of the Grid," 2018
Oil and acrylic on canvas
49 x 55 inches

Last month, Laurie Nye organized a 19-artist exhibition that took visitors to a pint-sized universe on an asteroid in the constellation Leo. Now, in her own exuberant exhibition of six paintings and an amazing 24-foot-long frieze, the L.A. painter takes us to Venus.

In her sensuously swirling works, that's pretty close to paradise — "heaven adjacent," as a real estate agent might say.

Nye's lush, color-saturated paintings make the Pit in Glendale seem a lot bigger than its dimensions. Pragmatically installed, by palette and mood, format and weight, her jam-packed canvases transform the former bay of an auto repair shop into a soaring landscape of possibility. They also make you feel as if you're walking on air.

Nye acknowledges the day-dreamy delights her paintings deliver in her exhibition's title: "Venusian Weather." The phrase opens some wiggle room between reality and fancy. You don't, after all, need to land on the second planet from the sun to experience its weather. Orbiting gets the job done. The same is true of imaginative transport.

Nye's paintings are all about levitation. Gravity-defying lightness struts its wondrous stuff in her abstract yet suggestively biomorphic pictures of suns (or sunflowers), planets (or soap bubbles), flora (or fauna), figures (or doodles), butterflies (or X-marks-the-spot gestures). Most of the marks Nye makes in her works are the visual equivalent of exclamations — involuntary bursts that begin in excitement and make rational analysis pale by comparison.

Everything you see is a slippery collision of granular materiality (oil and acrylic paint, brushed, rubbed and smudged on canvas), the shapes those substances take in Nye's compositions and your interpretations of both. Perception, cognition and imagination play fast and furious, setting off a splendid storm of visually satisfying contemplation.

Nye does something with color that's rarely seen in art, contemporary or otherwise. She uses it as the glue that holds everything together. Usually, that's what line does, structuring a composition by demarcating the contours of objects and enabling us to distinguish solid forms from the empty space around them.

All that is thrown into a topsy-turvy swirl in Nye's atmospheric paintings. All is flux. Nothing is stable, not for a moment. Her silly, unapologetically girly tints amplify the instability. But chaos does not reign.

The confusion you may feel in the presence of Nye's Edenic extravaganzas gives way to reveries that intensify the pleasure of being alive to the moment — of leaving your ego in the backseat so that you might actually go somewhere unexpected. Otherworldly, to be sure. But not so far off the beaten path that you can't find your way there.

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