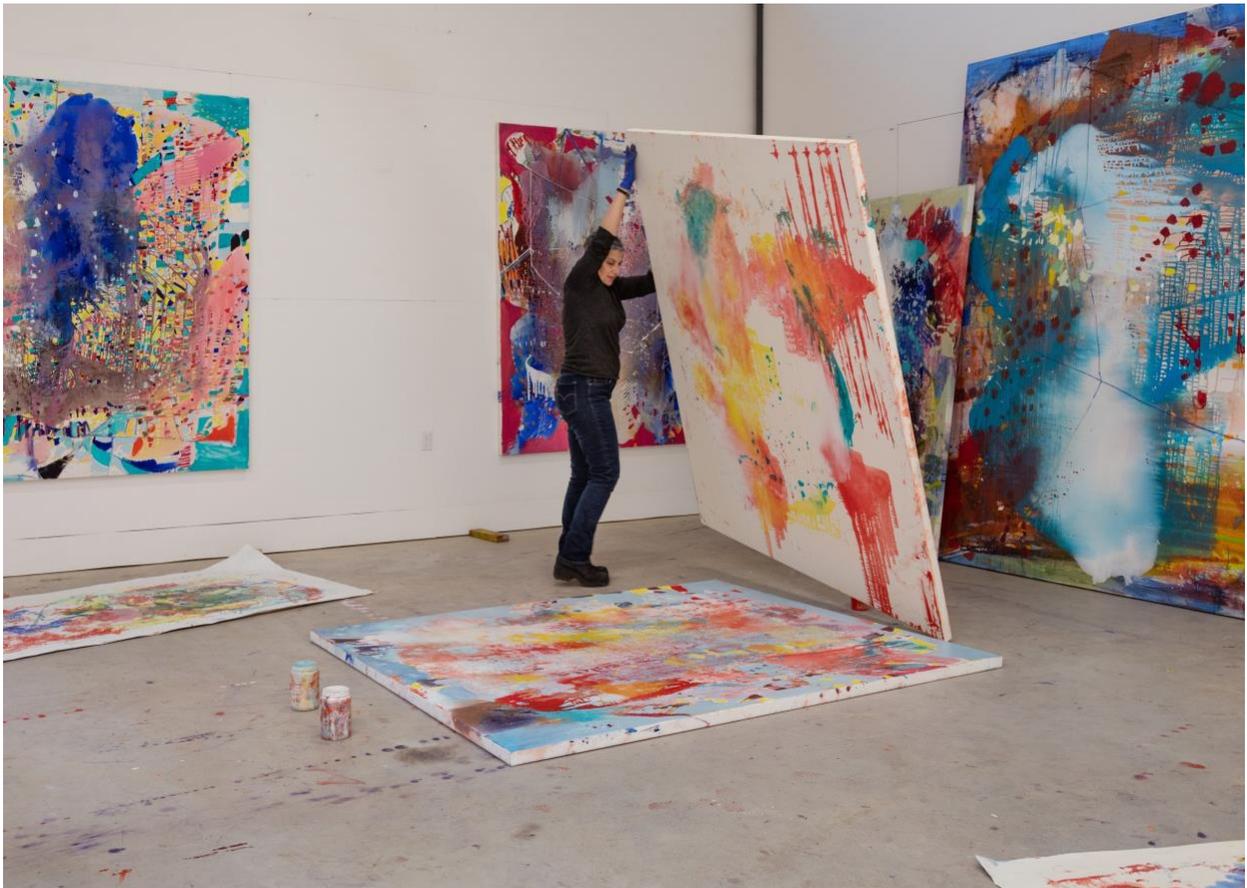


VAN DOREN
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Jackie Saccoccio's Femme Brut and the Seduction of Abstract Art

By Grace Edquist | January 23, 2020



Jackie Saccoccio in her West Cornwall studio. Charles Benton

“I think there always has to be seduction, but it can’t stop there. There has to be an answer,” the abstract artist Jackie Saccoccio says from her airy studio in West Cornwall, Connecticut. We’re discussing the layered complexity of her paintings—how they pull you in with beauty or technique or vibrant colors, but keep you there as you puzzle through their totality.

This urge to linger for answers is at the heart of *Femme Brut*, a new show of Saccoccio’s expansive work that opens January 22 at two New York galleries: Van Doren Waxter, the uptown gallery that has represented Saccoccio since

2008 and hosted six previous solo shows of her work, and Chart, a new Tribeca gallery opened last year by Clara Ha. More than 30 works in total—a mix of paintings, drawings, and prints—comprise *Femme Brut*. The show runs through March 14 at Van Doren Waxter and March 21 at Chart.

For the new works in this show, Saccoccio looked to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Gustav Courbet's *The Source of the Loue* (1864) as inspiration—a striking pairing of classical references for decidedly modern works. *The Tempest*, a dramatic, apocalyptic tale of magic and betrayal, informed several of the works at Chart, including the riveting *Tempest (Concave)* (2019) and *Tempest (Convex)* (2019)—both a towering 130 inches high.

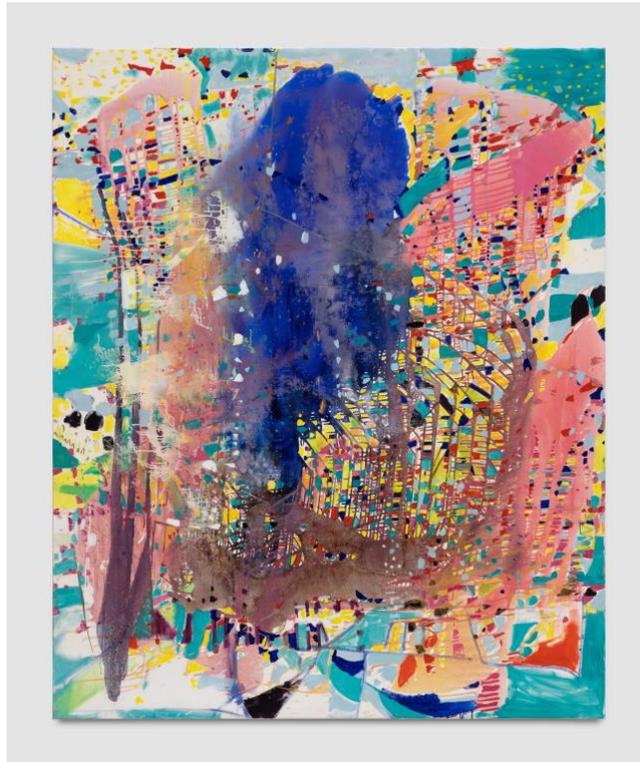


Jackie Saccoccio, *La Source de la Loue*, 2019, Oil and mica on linen. Photo: Charles Benton. Courtesy of Van Doren Waxter.

As to Courbet, Saccoccio found inspiration in the French painter's depiction of a cave, at once solid and vacuum-like. Hanging at Van Doren Waxter, *La Source de la Loue* (2019) exemplifies both this spatial awareness and Saccoccio's structural painting process: With one massive canvas lying prone on the studio floor, she perches another vertically above, letting the paint drip down and altering both works in unexpected ways. She uses aluminum stretchers with her canvases so that she can manipulate them herself—no small feat when the height of the canvas exceeds her own.

“I’ve always really liked the physicality of painting large,” says Saccoccio, who has exhibited in both solo and group shows around the world and has works at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, MCA in Chicago, and the Saatchi Gallery in London. This paint-dripping fabrication—and the interspersed brushwork, oil stick, and mica—“sets out a big problem I have to resolve,” she says. Though she may occasionally lose her initial vision for the piece throughout this regenerative process, the painting is resolved “when it reminds me again of what I was trying to do.”

While references to Abstract Expressionism in her work are apparent—a little Jackson Pollock, a little Joan Mitchell—Saccoccio says her influences are more external than those of the original, more introspective Ab Exers. She enumerates a wide-ranging list of artists she admires (Helen Frankenthaler, Gerhard Richter, Katharina Grosse, and yes, Pollock), but stresses that sculpture, film, literature (Shakespeare, Nabokov, Murakami), and historical periods have also been a guiding force.



Jackie Saccoccio, *Le Puits Noir (Convex)*, 2019, Oil and mica on linen. Photo: Charles Benton. Courtesy of Van Doren Waxter.

The result of this layering of both paint and references is a transfixing body of work. Each piece takes time to absorb. “I think that in terms of viewing [these paintings], you have to experience them in a very slow way,” says Augusto Arbizo, a partner at Van Doren Waxter. “You can’t do these paintings in one take.”

The drippings, webbings, and architectural patterns catch the eye, but how those eyes travel, and what they see, is individual. “I’m not going to be able to tell you how to look at it. My take on it will be different from yours. I think that is one of the great things about this type of abstraction,” Arbizo says.

It’s that open-endedness, perhaps, that has kept abstract painting a key element of modern art for nearly 100 years. Standing before one of Saccoccio's paintings, there’s a sense of push versus pull, explosion versus implosion. There’s a clear gravitational force to the work—the question is if that force is pulling you into the painting, or if the painting is reaching out to you, a figure of yearning committed to canvas.