
Jane Swavely

Neon Forests

By Noelani Kirschner | November 19, 2018



Jinx, oil on canvas, 73 x 61 inches, 2018

Painter Jane Swavely (<http://www.janeswavely.com/>) keeps a studio in the Bowery in New York City and exhibits her work as a member at A.I.R. Gallery in Brooklyn. Although her canvases depict abstracted forms and colors, she considers her work to be based in the landscape tradition. Her latest show, *Jinx*, explores the boundary between the conscious and the subconscious, and derives inspiration from both the natural environment and supernatural forces.

“I don’t think of my paintings as conceptual but after they’re done, the concepts behind them become clearer. All paintings are made on the floor, where I use a series of washes to create a luminescence. The canvas has to be flat, or else the paint drips. I’m interested in composition and in experimenting with different color combinations. The paintings are all about the color.

I’m a huge fan of Instagram, sadly—I generally don’t like social media, but Instagram has been a great way to connect with other artists. There were all of these green lights and neon colors appearing across my feed, and I don’t know if that subconsciously influenced my work or not. With regard to the title of my show, I posted a couple of pictures of my paintings to Instagram, and a performance artist in my orbit saw them and said, ‘Jinx!’ because she would post similar things from her art, like a green screen from one of her performance sets. In the art world, there’s often a zeitgeist or a consciousness just below the surface. You don’t realize it’s there until you start to see it materialize through everyone’s output.





Green Screen #3 , oil on canvas, 54 x 56 inches, 2018

The works in *Jinx* are almost alive. My canvases are abstract, but the references to landscape are strong. I spend a lot of time in Upstate New York, and there's this lure of the supernatural up there. The dark woods, animals, even UFOs. I had a friend who saw one hovering above her field in the Hudson Valley about 15 years ago. She thought it was ski lights at first, but it wasn't. There's a sense of these things that comes through somehow in my series.

Jinx is a balance between looking at nature and the subconscious experience of being in nature. I don't know if my paintings depict land or water half the time—they're a mixture of both. I don't like to force the viewer into anything, so I keep the titles of my work neutral. I don't want to direct the narrative. I hope that my work unfolds for the viewer and that there are new aspects for them to discover. Some people see figures in my paintings, which is always surprising. Whatever they see or whatever the paintings evoke is fine with me."

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Noelani Kirschner is a former assistant editor for the *Scholar*.
