

Judith Brassard Brown
Blessed Unrest

Kingston Gallery

May 30 – June 30, 2012

CURATED BY
Leonie Bradbury
ESSAY BY
Laura Tonelli



“No artist is ever pleased.
There is no satisfaction whatever at any time.
There is only a queer divine dissatisfaction;
A blessed unrest that keeps us marching and
Makes us more alive than the others”
Martha Graham

Blessed Unrest
by Laura Tonelli

In this current exhibition of new work by the well-established Boston artist Judith Brassard Brown, monumental, sun-filled oil and collage paintings of the Italian countryside are exhibited with smaller, mixed media “disruptions” which together express the binary character of this world we live in, *Blessed Unrest*.

The body of work is informed by a poem, as is often the case for this artist. (Gregory Djanikian’s poem *Somewhere Between* set the stage for Brown’s Danforth show.) *Blessed Unrest* references what Graham termed the “divine dissatisfaction” in the act of creation. For Brown, it expresses her sense of this world – at times supremely beautiful and good while at others dark, messy and conflicting in its malevolence – and frames her life-long pursuit as an artist, to express both the beautiful and the sublime in the nature that surrounds us.

In the big paintings, we find ourselves transported to the hot, dry landscape of Lazio where color and texture, light and shadow become the means for conveying a sense of being and place, both specific and uni-



The roots of Brown’s Italian portraits are deep, planted many years ago during an unexpected summer sojourn to Trieste. It was there the artist first felt the strong pull and complete connection to the people and landscape of Italy. Years later, it would be the *vedute* of Tuscany and Lazio that would resonate most – a region that is being constantly excavated to reveal medieval crypts and roman baths and, deeper still, thousands of Etruscan tombs. Brown’s paintings remind us that the new world sits on an old world.

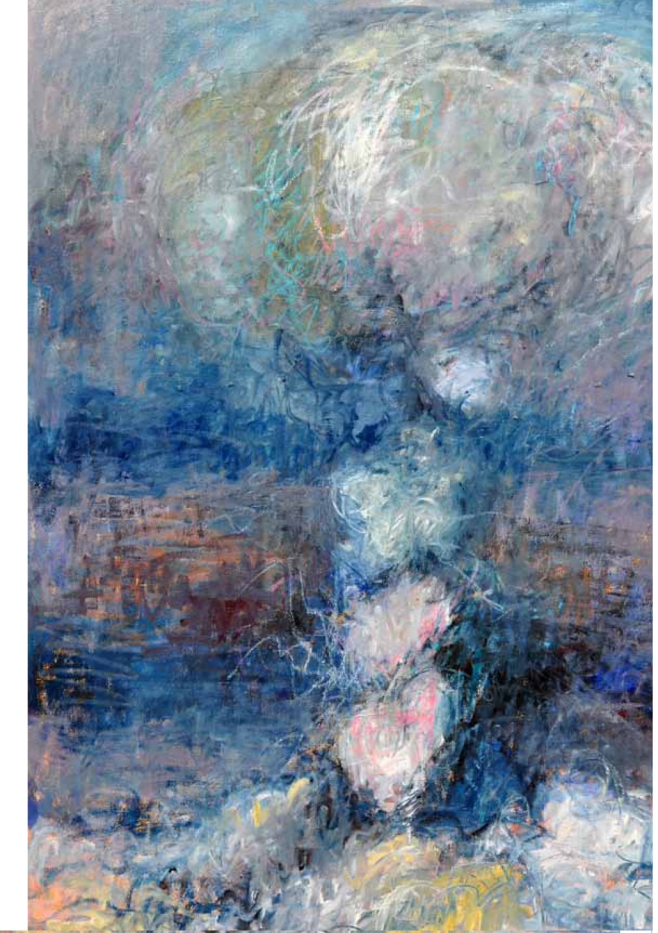
But most important, she succeeds in evoking the powerful stillness and overwhelming beauty and complexity of such an ancient, layered place.

Overwhelming, too, is the darkness (Graham’s “dissatisfaction”) that we humans experience, no matter when or where we live. This too is a recurring theme in Brown’s work. She reminds us unflinchingly that death and human conflict are part of a continuum. In her Danforth Museum show *Somewhere Between*, this was expressed in small collages like *War and Words* (2005); at the Art Complex show, *Out of Time*, portraits of deceased loved ones formed diptychs with still lifes. In this show the two aspects are always present, but the unrest crescendos in *A Moment Ago* and *Other Places Other Lives*, a charged grid of twelve 6 inch squares, mixed media works on paper. Here we make out only remnants of life amidst the charred cityscapes and bursts of light and debris. The heat of the tuscan sun is replaced by the smoke of the Arab Spring or the aftermath of fallen bombs in Japan, Dresden or Iraq.

Always looking beneath the surface, Judy Brown skillfully evokes the power of two worlds - the beautiful and serene, and the sublime and fragile – and asks why. *Blessed Unrest*.

Laura Tonelli, Professor of Art History and Dean of Faculty and Academic Affairs at Montserrat College of Art.

versal. We all share the common experience of these ancient lands. Some places are familiar by now, to those of us who follow Judy’s work – the dense outgrowth and cool mysterious waters at Lake Vico in *The Source*, the cypresses that cluster proudly on the hillsides providing an interval of cool shade in *The Grove* – but the meaning is always changing. Above all, these are human places, and in Brown’s hands they communicate much more than the topographical details or times of day and weather. For the careful viewer, they reveal their stories slowly. Beneath the main subject we discover in collaged elements layers of history and bits of narrative – an old train ticket here, a love note there - individualizing each landscape like a portrait.



ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT
Homage to Saturnia, 2009
oil on canvas
36 x 24 inches

Etruscan Path #8, 2011
oil on board
16 x 20 inches

LEFT
A Moment Ago, 2012
mixed media on canvas
30 x 40 inches

COVER
Source, 2012
mixed media on board
40 x 30 inches



Judith Brassard Brown

Represented in turn by the Bromfield Gallery and the Arden Gallery in Boston, and the Gimbel Gallery of Contemporary Art in New York City, Brown is currently represented by the Kingston Gallery in Boston. She has an extensive record of solo, group, juried and invitational exhibitions in New England, New York and Italy. Her work is included in museum, non-profit, corporate and private collections in the United States and abroad.

A professor at Montserrat College of Art, she teaches drawing in the Foundation program and upper level courses in the Painting and Drawing Department. The founder of Montserrat College of Art’s Summer Studio Program in Viterbo, Italy, she returns most summers as faculty. Brown continues to use her investigations of other cultures, landscapes and histories as central themes in her work. Educated at Boston University’s School of Visual Arts, she received a BFA in 1974 and a MFA in 1978. www.judithbrassardbrown.com

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the love and support of Molly Donovan and Ezra Pryor, their partners John Donovan and Heather Alison Case and my grandchildren Ann, Jack and Nora Donovan; with appreciation for the Webster Street Salon for their critique and insight, and in particular, to Leonie Bradbury as curator of the exhibition and Laura Tonelli for her catalog essay. Thanks also to John Colan for his friendship and help with this project and so many others through the years; to my sister Elisabeth Brown for her ongoing counsel, support and sense of humor; to Montserrat College of Art and their faculty development grant for this project, and to my family and friends for their patience, acceptance and the time we spend together.



Kingston Gallery
450 Harrison Avenue #43
Boston, MA 02118
617 423 4113
Wednesday – Sunday 12 – 5
or by appointment

