



RAGNA BRUNO

COURTHOUSE GALLERY
FINE ART

RAGNA BRUNO

JULY 15 – AUGUST 9, 2019

Inner Visions

Essay by Daniel Kany



Far Away Thoughts, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches

COVER *Arrangement*, 2019, oil on canvas, 48 x 48 inches

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Blooming Trees, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches



Te Amo, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches



Signs of Spring, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches



Purple Light, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches

RAGNA BRUNO

THE SOLITUDE OF PERCEPTION THE PAINTINGS OF RAGNA BRUNO

by Daniel Kany



Grasses, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches

Ragna Bruno's light-soaked studio is a small building in Hancock designed by her architect son, Blue Hill-based Blas Bruno. For generations, her entire family have been artists, musicians, architects and museum professionals. Her Swedish mother married her German father and they settled in Spain, where Bruno grew up and regularly visits since settling in the United States in 1975 with her composer and conductor husband Werner Torkanowsky who passed away in 1992.

Bruno's studio is her sanctuary, her place of "peace and total privacy." She works there every day, painting with oils or drawing, as she does, by leaking ink off the dipped handle of a stylus.

"I draw freely without preconceived thoughts," she muses, "then there are no boundaries. Anything can happen. And the drawing may come to life on its own."



Arrangement, 2019, oil on canvas, 48 x 48 inches



Hanging Flowers, 2019, oil on canvas, 48 x 48 inches

Bruno's drawn lines crackle with an electric intensity, dancing like sparks on the page. Their dynamic presence allows them to shift between being painterly marks, bounding forms and carving out negative spaces. Bruno treats the page like space and let her marks shift between 3D and 2D logic, at times remaining insistently abstract and other times creating figures or establishing calligraphic rhythms.

Bruno's paintings also flutter between abstraction and representation. While she stands up to make both her drawings and paintings, the logic of the paintings is landscape—the result of her body's interaction with the vertical support. Bruno uses a reductive palette of unbleached neutrals and pigments that echo the organically mineral qualities of the earth. She also generally uses a low contrast approach to her hues, which gives the sense that light drives her sensibilities rather than color per se. Her landscape scenes tend to be meditatively quiet, led by a sense of atmosphere that reflects the mineral world of Maine: granite grays, sandy ochres, woody charcoals, and silver skies sporting an occasional puff-white cloud.

Bruno's paintings also create their own grids. But they are the result of perception rather than the modernist dogma of the grid as the starting point of



Pastoral, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches



Dusk, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches

the literalist expression of the painted canvas. Bruno orients herself (and the viewer) with the horizon. Below that are bands of foreground and midground. Above it is the sky, but it appears as space that reaches completely to the viewer. Bruno then often claims the vertical center of the painting as a band that echoes our own body, the spatial basis for our visual perception of the world—landscapes or painting. While this central band isn't always visible (imagine the reflection of the moon on water), it reveals Bruno's understanding of painting as the balance of perception with the actual act of painting.

For Bruno, painting is a subjective interaction with the canvas and materials. Because it is based in vision, it necessarily incorporates our visual perceptions of the physical world. These might include the horizon line of the ground on which we are standing—Bruno stands when she paints and draws—but also space, atmosphere, rhythm and time. This explains why Bruno can start a painting and may then wind up with a music-oriented grid of jazzy dashes, a practically pure abstraction, or an ocean landscape with a centered cloud in the night sky. One might have been primarily inspired by the music in her studio, another by the visual development of paint on

the canvas, and the other by a memory of a particular place—transportive through space and time.

Bruno's subjective relationship to her process connects her approach not only to Surrealism and postwar painting (both European and American), but it also aligns with the Maine tradition of American landscape painting. We find moody subjective solitude at the core of Winslow Homer's work as well as Marsden Hartley's. With John Marin, we see the landscape carved into sections marked by tensions between their status as spatially distinct while being part of the same painterly composition. What we find among them is that the tension isn't between flat painting and real place but between painting as encountered object and subjective perception: subjective versus objective.

Bruno's painterly subjectivity starts with her solitude: the welcomed peace of being alone in the studio, the possibility, the potential. She exults in this romanticism and its promise of freedom. It's where she can incorporate what matters to her—memories, experiences, love; however bittersweet—and present her vision as an affirming exaltation of life. The same could be said of Homer: however heroic and lustily sublime his ocean landscapes might seem, they



Black on Green, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches



Random Melodies, 2019, oil on wood, 15 x 13 inches

ultimately succeed not because they impress, but because we connect with them. We empathize with his aloneness, his meditative wonder, his subjective perception of the unflinchingly vast world.

This is why I have long seen Bruno as a particularly worthy Maine painter. It's not her cultural erudition or her art historical nuance: It's because her work is so effectively authentic and personal that we seem to directly connect to her subjective perspective. The solitude of her painting is quiet, beautiful and free. And that is a good place for any of us to be.

DANIEL KANY is an art historian, art critic, and freelance writer. More than 420 of Kany's art criticism columns have appeared in the *Maine Sunday Telegram* and *Portland Press Herald*. Kany has authored dozens of catalogs, publications, and magazine articles about art and artists. He has won multiple awards from the Maine Press Association for his art criticism. Kany studied at Bowdoin College and at Johns Hopkins University. Kany lives in Cumberland, Maine.



The Way Home, 2019, oil on canvas, 48 x 48 inches



Snow In The Distance, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches



Blue Composition, oil on canvas, 48 x 48 inches



Stormy Weather, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches



Moon on the Water, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches



Remembering Klee, oil on board, 26 x 30 inches



Blue Landscape, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches



Maine In The Fall, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches



Lapping Waters, 2019, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches



Among Trees, 2019, oil on panel, 10 x 8 inches



Winter, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches

RAGNA BRUNO



Ragna Bruno was born in Madrid, Spain, the daughter of a German father, and a Swedish mother. She was raised in a multilingual family and is fluent in Spanish, German, English, and French. Throughout her early life, Bruno studied dance, music, and art in Madrid, Switzerland, and London. Her father was a poet and businessman, who came from a long line of artists and architects; her mother, a sculptor who spoke six languages. Their friends were artists and musicians, and Bruno grew up immersed in the arts at home and at school. From the age of fourteen until she went to study abroad, Bruno made it a point to visit the Prado Museum everyday, walking a half hour each way.

Bruno travelled extensively in Europe, Central and South America, and India. She owned an antique store in Madrid, and cofounded BERMÚSICA, an international concert management company based in Madrid with its own concert series, "Orchestras of the World."

Bruno came to the U.S. in 1975 to marry Werner Torkanowsky, a world renowned conductor. The couple moved to Hancock, Maine, in 1977. Here Bruno was able to pursue her passion for art and committed to being a full-time artist. Bruno continues to live and maintain a studio in Hancock, and visits Spain frequently to see family and friends.

ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, Maine 2013, '15, '17, '19
She-Bear Gallery, Portland, Maine 2014
Husson College, Bangor, Maine 2006
Between the Muse Gallery, Rockland, Maine 1997
Leighton Gallery, Blue Hill, Maine 1984–2011

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, Maine 2012–2019
New York Institute Of Technology, New York, New York 2011, '12
International Drawing Project DINA-4 in Malaga, Spain 2011
Aarhus Gallery, "White Show," Belfast, Maine 2011
Aarhus Gallery, "Grid Works," Belfast, Maine 2010
Maine Art Scene Virtual Show 2010, '12, '13
Blue Hill Library, Summer Show, Blue Hill, Maine 2009, '11
Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Small Works, Ellsworth, Maine 2007
Wheaton College, "Eros Logos," Norton, Massachusetts 2006
Blue Hill, Bristol, Rhode Island 2005
Deborah Davis Fine Art Gallery, Hudson, New York 2004
McPherson College of Art, Catalog Award 1991
Mountain Arts, Sugarloaf, Maine 1988
Pleiades Gallery, Soho, New York 1988
Leighton Gallery, Blue Hill, Maine 1988
Union of Maine Visual Artists, College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, Maine
Chautauqua Exhibition of American Art

PUBLICATIONS

Daniel Kany. *Maine Sunday Telegram*, July 2013
"The 60 Most Collectible Artist In Maine," *Maine Home + Design*, April 2010
Jakimides, Annaliese. "The Canvas," *Maine Home + Design*, September, 2010

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Poetry Festival, collaboration with poet Cate Marvin, Belfast, 2017
Owner of an antique gallery in Madrid, Spain,
specializing in antique museum quality frames
Co-founder of IBERMÚSICA, an international concert management
with its own concert series "Orchestras of the World"

EDUCATION

Studied Music and Dance, Madrid Conservatory, Madrid, Spain
Art History and Languages, Lausanne, Switzerland, and London, England
Life Drawing at Escuela de San Fernando, Madrid, Spain
Clay Sculpture with Squidge Davis
Printing with Fran Merritt, Haystack School of Crafts, Deer Isle, Maine



Geometric Spirit, 2019, oil on wood, 10 x 10 inches

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6 court street ellsworth, maine 04605 courthousegallery.com 207 667 6611