

An abstract painting with a textured, impasto surface. The color palette is dominated by muted blues, greys, and earthy yellows. The composition is layered, with darker, more saturated blue and grey tones in the lower half, and lighter, more airy tones in the upper half. The brushstrokes are visible and expressive, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall mood is contemplative and evocative, consistent with the title 'Memories and Dreams'.

RAGNA BRUNO

*Memories and Dreams*

# RAGNA BRUNO

## *MEMORIES AND DREAMS*

AUGUST 2 – SEPTEMBER 2, 2025

Essay by Karin Wilkes



*Reflection*, 2025, oil on board, 8 x 10 inches

COVER *Memorias de Agua, detail*, 2025, oil on canvas, 48 x 48 inches

COURTHOUSE GALLERY  
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*Dusk*, 2025, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 inches



*Pink Stripe*, 2025, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 inches





*Yellow Horizon*, 2025, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 inches



*Golden Light*, 2025, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 inches





# RAGNA BRUNO

MEMORIES AND DREAMS

Ragna Bruno in her studio, Hancock, Maine, 2025.





*Yellow Horizon*, 2025, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 inches



*Golden Light*, 2025, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 inches



# RAGNA BRUNO MEMORIES AND DREAMS

Essay by Karin Wilkes

*In my life, I'm a dreamer," Bruno explains. "When I paint, I like to have a dream, but I don't paint wildly. I like my painting to be in submission to my rational order. There is a geometric structure underneath."*



Ragna Bruno and Werner Torkanowsky

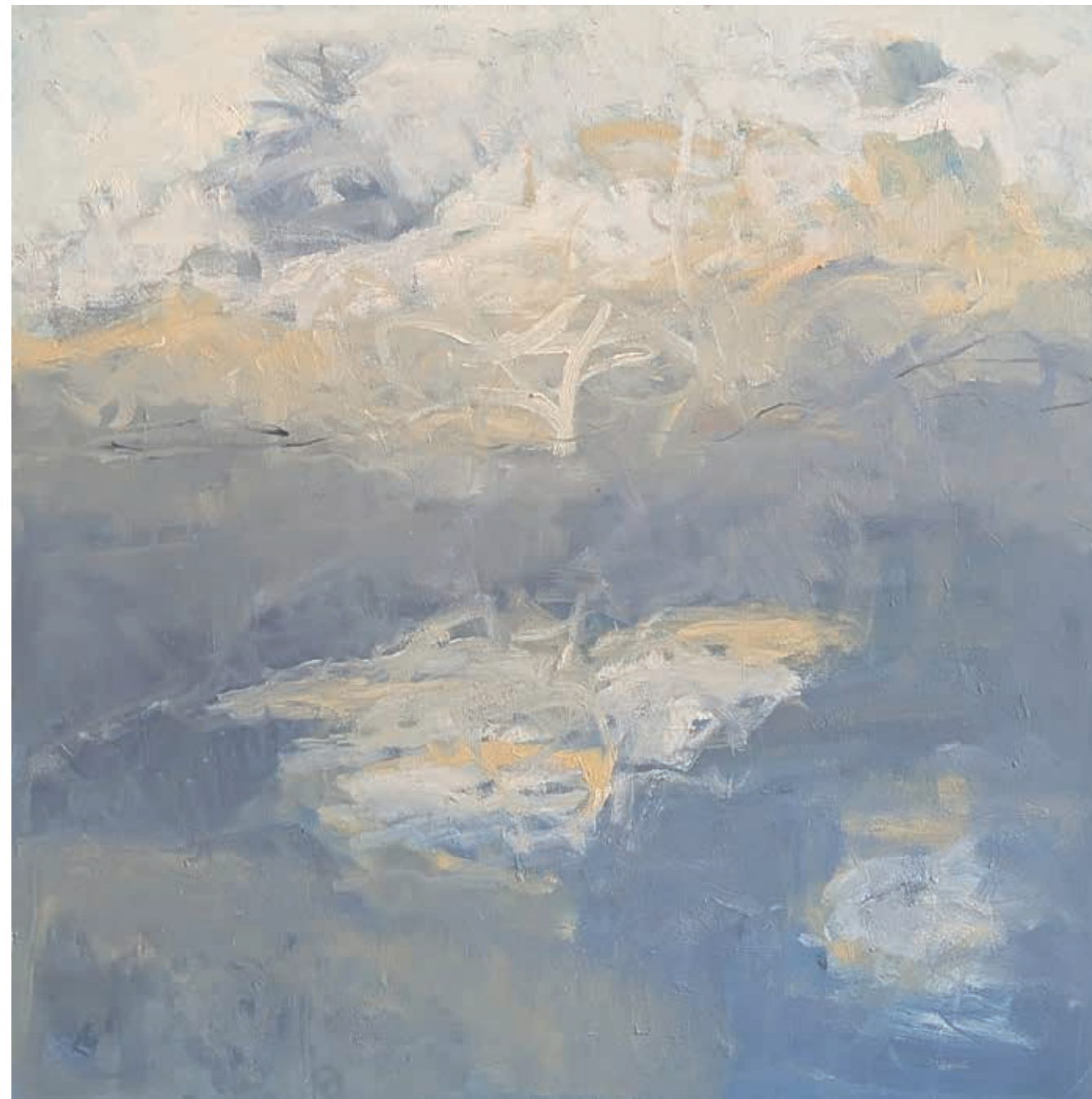


Ragna and Werner share a kiss in Santorini, Greece.

The abundant, natural light is the first thing you notice when you walk into Ragna Bruno's Hancock studio. Southerly facing picture windows, upper transoms, and skylights in the vaulted ceiling allow ample sunlight to flood the room. This light-filled sanctuary enhances the colors and textures of Bruno's translucent palette, adding warmth and luminosity to her sublime paintings.

The studio was designed by Bruno's son Blas and his wife Elizabeth, both architects, who own Bruno Architecture in Blue Hill. Blas followed his mother from Spain when she moved to the United States to marry Werner Torkanowsky (1926–1992) in 1975. Torkanowsky was a world-renowned German-Russian conductor, composer, and violinist. The couple moved to Hancock in 1977, where Bruno was finally able to pursue her passion for art and to commit to being a full-time artist.

The centerpiece for Bruno's solo exhibition, *Memories and Dreams*, is *Memorias de Água*, a large-scale oil on canvas. There is a rhythmic, almost ghostly repetition of floating forms, suggesting



*Memorias de Água*, 2025, oil on canvas, 48 x 48 inches





both presence and absence, like the fragments of a dream recalled just after waking. “In my life, I’m a dreamer,” Bruno explains. “When I paint, I like to have a dream, but I don’t paint wildly. I like my painting to be in submission to my rational order. There is a geometric structure underneath.”

Memories and Dreams is a respite. The viewer is immersed in Bruno’s dreams, surrounded by watery reflections, foggy shores, wispy trees, and submerged recollections. Like the Mark Rothko Room at Tate Modern in London, Memories and Dreams creates a meditative atmosphere in a dedicated room where one can experience a profound sense of peace.

The memories and dreams in this exhibition are rooted in the life-long journey of a woman shaped by a multicultural, art-filled upbringing in Madrid, Spain, and her marriage to Werner Torkanowsky, which brought her to Hancock, Maine, where she has lived as an artist for the past forty-eight years. This exhibition celebrates Bruno’s ninetieth year, her European history, and her lengthy career as a notable Maine painter.

**Ragna Bruno was born** in 1935 in Madrid, Spain. Her father, Brün Bruno (1905–1983), was German and her mother, Ena Almqvist Bruno, was Swedish. Her parents met at the Universidad Central in Madrid where they were studying Spanish. After they were married, the couple settled in Madrid.



Ragna’s parents Brün Bruno (1905–1983) and Ena Bruno Almqvist.



Brün and Ena enjoying a drink at a cafe in Madrid.





Ragna's mother, Ena, on an excursion, and her father, Brün, on a donkey exploring the Spanish countryside. Ragna with her mother at the port in Vigo, Spain.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, Ragna was a year old. Madrid was under siege and dangerous, and the Swedish Embassy transported the Bruno family to Stockholm where they lived with Ragna's maternal grandparents, Karl and Beda Almqvist, until the war was over.

Brün came from a long line of artists and architects. He started life as a poet, but soon discovered he was very good at business. Realizing he would not be able to support a family from his poetry, Brün became a businessman, and a very successful one.

Ena was a multilingual woman, who spoke six languages. Ragna speaks four languages, and during the Covid pandemic she learned Italian. Ena was a dedicated wife and mother, who enjoyed sculpting and made busts of family and friends.

Her parents' friends were artists, musicians, poets, and writers. Ragna grew up immersed in the arts at home and at school. Throughout her early life, she studied dance, music, and art in Madrid, Switzerland, and London.

Brün and Ena had five children, one boy and four girls, including Ragna. The family lived in Madrid, and then Bilbao. Summers were spent in Vigo, a port city on the southern shore of an inlet of the Atlantic Ocean. Here, her father rented a large seaside house with beautiful gardens and a tennis court. For many years he rented a country house in Avila, a medieval walled city on the banks of the Adaja River about an hour and a half northwest of Madrid.

Ragna remembers her mother Ena as being a stylish woman. A favorite photo shows Ena



OPPOSITE The exterior of the Bruno family home in Madrid, Spain.





Ragna's mother Ena at horse races in Madrid. Brün and Ena (left) entertaining friends at their home in Bilbao; Ragna and her brother in the foreground.

at the horse races at Hipódromo de la Zarzuela, smartly dressed, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and white gloves. On an outing to the race track, thirteen-year-old Ragna was ridiculed by her brother for “stupidly betting on the worst horse in the race.” Ironically, his horse lost, and her horse won along with a payout of 500 pesetas. In recollection, Ragna said “The experience was exhilarating!”

In all our conversations over the years, Ragna speaks fondly of her parents, who often visited her and Werner in Hancock. Eventually, they bought a home next door to Ragna, and spent their summers there.

Ragna remembers being interested in, and reading about, art at a very young age. “Art is a

passion, a ‘must’ one is born with,” she explains. From the age of fourteen until she went to study abroad, Bruno made a point to visit the Museo Nacional del Prado daily, walking half an hour each way after school. “I was constantly looking at art in museums and in books. All kinds of art—painting, drawing, poetry, dancing, and music.”

**An early artistic influence** was Ragna's paternal grandfather Otto Bruno (1881–1975), a German landscape painter. “I went to bed looking at a painting of my grandfather's, always a landscape, and I got up every morning looking at his paintings.”

Otto and his wife Lisa Bruno Busch, Ragna's grandmother, lived in the port city of Bremen



Ragna chatting with her father at the family's country home in Avila, Spain.

in northern Germany. Otto exhibited and sold his paintings and achieved acclaim for his work, which is included in the permanent collections of two German museums. His wife Lisa came from a well-to-do family and was savvy with business.

During and after World War I, Germany faced severe hardships. In 1918, the cost of a

loaf of bread remained relatively stable, around a quarter of a Reichsmark, but by late 1923, the value of the German mark plummeted due to hyperinflation, and the cost of a loaf of bread skyrocketed, costing billions of Reichsmarks. As a result, Ragna's grandparents lost all their money. Remarkably, they did not lose their large home, which had several apartments that Lisa rented.





Ragna's grandparents Lisa Bruno Busch and Otto Bruno (1881–1975)



Ragna's grandmother Lisa (right) with her sister Hanna and Tove.

*When Ragna was sixteen years old, she would sit with her grandfather as they looked through his paintings, examining each one, then separating them into two different piles.*

Otto and Lisa had three children, Brün (Ragna's father), Ragna's aunt Tove (which means dove), and her uncle Otto, who died from a failed appendectomy in his early forties.

The famous artist's colony Worpswede was less than an hour northeast of Bremen. When Brün was pursuing poetry, he often visited the colony and made many friends there. On one occasion Brün had the opportunity to read one of his poems at Worpswede when the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) was living at the colony.

Otto (Ragna's grandfather) was passionate about his rose garden, which he loved and tended with great care. He was a professional photographer in addition to his painting career. Otto took all the family photographs in his beloved rose garden.

Ragna's family often visited her grandparents in the summer. As a child, Ragna would spend time with her grandfather in his studio. He was a prolific painter and had stacks of his paintings in his studio. When Ragna was sixteen years old, she would sit with her grandfather as they looked



Ragna's Aunt Tove as a child.

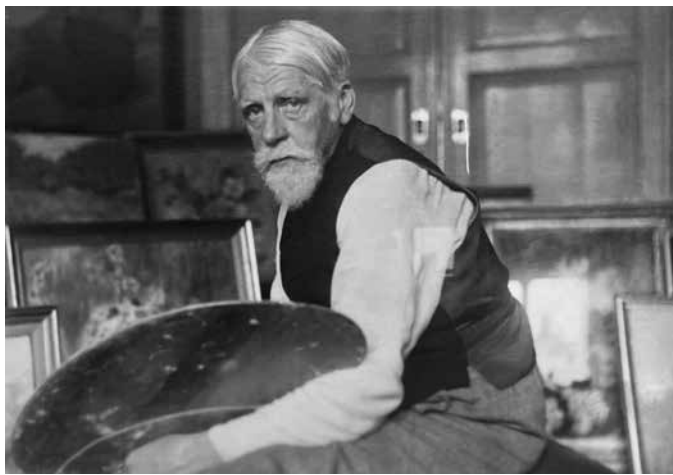


Brün and Tove in Spain.





A landscape by Ragna's grandfather, Otto Bruno, and the artist in his studio in Bremen, Germany.



through his paintings, examining each one, then separating them into two different piles. One stack was for the very best paintings, and the other pile was for those that did not quite have the same degree of greatness.

When Otto turned ninety, Ragna's entire family went to Bremen to celebrate his birthday. Gathered together in front of a Lufthansa jet, the large Bruno family created quite the entourage as they posed for the camera in 1971.

Ragna was married in 1955, and had three sons Yago, Juan, and Blas. When she and her husband separated, divorce was not allowed in Spain. At the time a legal separation in Spain was defined as from the "bed and table," which was later followed by an annulment. Nowadays, a couple is automatically divorced after they live apart for one year.

Traditionally, women in Spain retain their maiden names upon marriage, and they are not expected to adopt their husband's surname. Ragna kept her maiden name Bruno during her marriage, and after her divorce.

By the 1960s, the second-wave of feminism in Spain was emerging, and the Francoist regime's emphasis on Catholic womanhood was increasingly challenged as women sought greater equality in education, work, and legal rights.

Ragna was a modern, independent, single mother, and a successful business woman. She opened an antique boutique in Madrid, where she sold antique furniture and paintings to a well-heeled clientele. Ragna sold an El Greco painting to an American politician, who waited two years for Ragna to obtain permission from the Spanish government to ship the Greco to



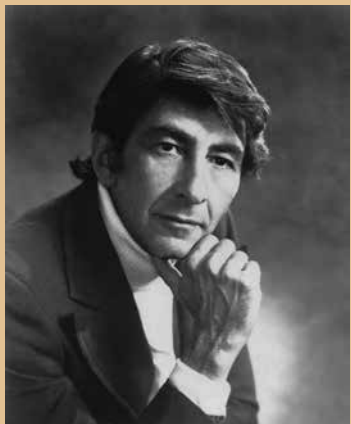
The entire Bruno family flew from Madrid to Bremen, Germany, to celebrate Ragna's grandfather's ninetieth birthday in 1971. FROM THE RIGHT Ragna's sister Renate and her husband, Ragna. LEFT Ragna's sister Diana, Ragna's sister, and Ragna's sons Juan, Yago, Blas with his thumbs in his pockets. Behind Blas is his cousin.

Washington DC. Ava Gardner purchased an eighteenth century French fauteuil from Ragna. At the time, Gardner was living in Madrid, and the Spanish public was captivated by Gardner's scandalous, and passionate, love affair with the famous bullfighter Luis Miguel Dominguín. Gardner was still married to Frank Sinatra, and Dominguín was married to Lucia Bosè, a famous

Italian actress. The affair destroyed Dominguín's marriage.

When Ragna traveled to India to buy antiques, she stayed with "friends of a friend." Connections were made through a Bruno family friend, who was the ambassador from India. Ragna traveled to Bombay, Madras, and New Delhi, where she stayed with Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay (1903–1988),





**Werner Torkanowsky** (1926–1992) conducted numerous orchestras throughout Europe, South America, and the United States. After receiving the Naumburg Award in 1961, Torkanowsky made his debut with the New York Philharmonic and the New York City Opera. He went on to conduct major orchestras, including in Israel, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Detroit, and led productions at the San Diego Opera and the Seattle Opera.

For thirteen years Torkanowsky was the musical director and chief conductor of the New Orleans Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra. Throughout his career, he continued his work as a composer and a violinist, appearing as a soloist and in chamber ensembles. Torkanowsky received rave reviews when he played with the Carnegie Mellon Trio in London and The Hague.

Torkanowsky's connection to Hancock began when he studied conducting with Pierre Monteux from 1954–1958. In Maine, Torkanowsky played with the New England Piano Quartette. In 1981, he was named director and chief conductor of the Bangor Symphony Orchestra, where he remained until he succumbed to cancer on October 20, 1992 in Bar Harbor, Maine, at the age of sixty-six.

the Indian social reformer. Kamaladevi invited Ragna to accompany her to a concert in New Delhi, and introduced Ragna to Nehru.

After Ragna sold her antique shop, she and her brother-in-law cofounded Ibermúsica, an international concert management company based in Madrid with its own concert series, “Orchestras of the World.”

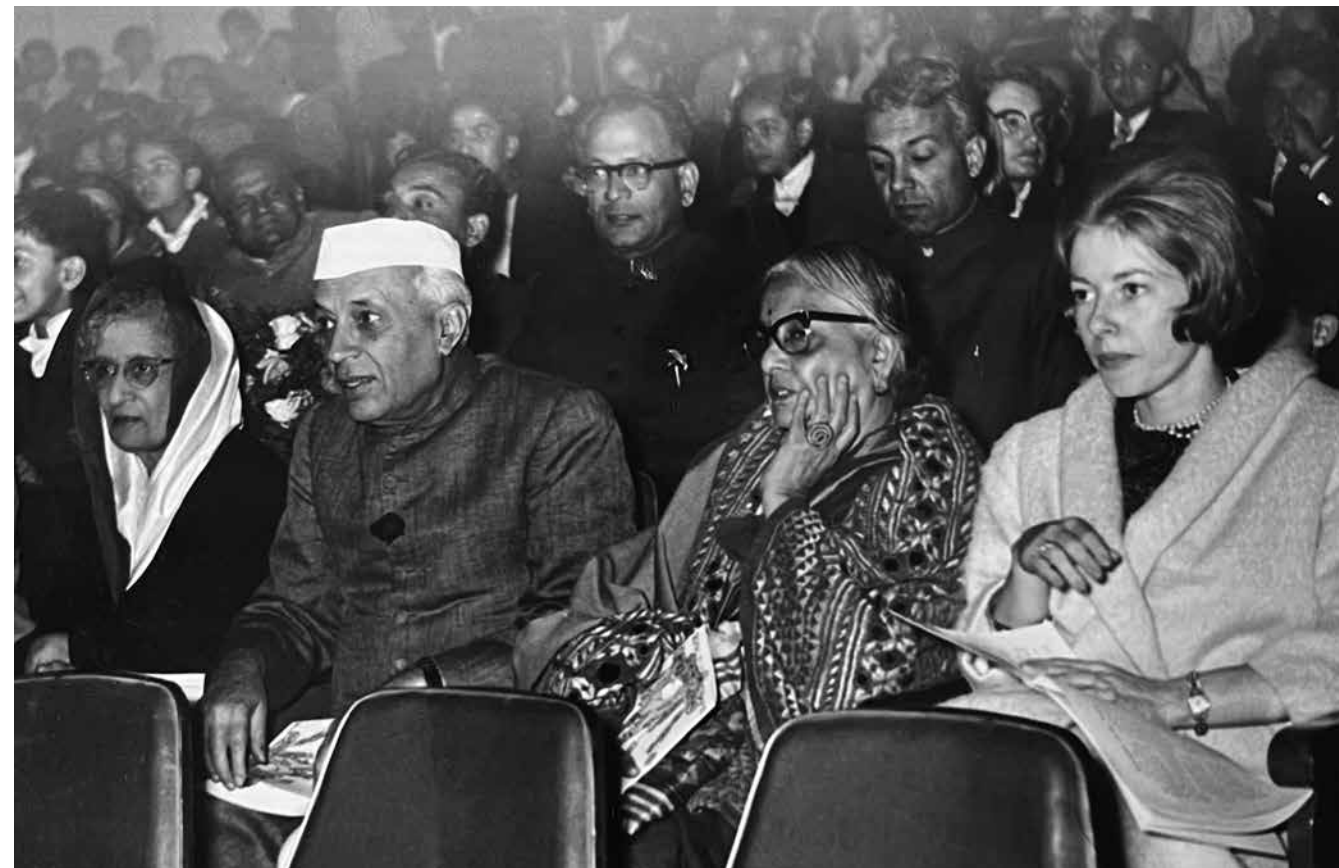
Ragna met Werner Torkanowsky when she was vice president of Ibermúsica. They hired Werner to tour for several consecutive years.

On his second tour, Ragna realized Werner was half Russian and half German. They began speaking German. Soon after they fell in love and married. Throughout their eighteen-year marriage, Ragna and Werner only spoke German.

**Bruno pursued painting** full-time after she and Werner moved to Hancock in 1977. It was Blas who took his mother's paintings to the Leighton Gallery in Blue Hill. The owner, Judith Leighton, immediately added Bruno to her stable of artists and exhibited her work until Leighton's death in 2011.

For Bruno, nature and landscape are very much present in this exhibition. “Being in nature has always been important to me. I love being surrounded by water, and I am fortunate to live in Hancock where I always feel very connected to nature.”

Bruno produced over forty oil paintings for this exhibition, including a series of mixed media paintings on Japanese paper. The greenish tones



On a visit to India, Ragna stayed with Kamaladevi, who invited her to a concert in New Delhi, and introduced her to Nehru, 1961.

and dark blue lines in *Niebla* (meaning fog in Spanish) evoke a half-real, half-imagined space, as if moving through a dreamscape where things seem familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. Bruno's use of impasto on the delicate Japanese paper gives the sense that something is trying to emerge from the fog, but never fully takes form, like a vague memory, or a fleeting thought.

*Toro*, another mixed media painting, is a study in duality: the raw, visceral power of the bull is tempered by a quiet intensity. Bruno's fluid,

frenzied marks and dabs of white paint hint at the struggle between strength and vulnerability, chaos and unpredictability, much like *el tercio de muerte*, the final stage of the bullfight.

Just a single large-scale painting, *Memorias de Agua*, appears in this exhibition. Bruno would have made more, but she fractured her pelvis last July, and was on bed rest until late November. Standing at the easel for long periods of time was difficult, so I suggested she try painting tiny.





Woman In The Garden B, oil on canvas, 5 x 5 inches



Woman In The Garden C, oil on canvas, 5 x 5 inches

Although modest in scale, Bruno's 5 x 5 and 6 x 6 inch paintings carry the same emotional weight and poetic sense as her larger work. In *Women in the Garden*, there is a sense of stillness, but the figures are not static. Light shifts, air moves around them, allowing the paintings to breathe. *Diptych With Sun* is a master class in restraint and atmosphere. The warm creams and dusty peach are interrupted by a few dark lines and a flash of orange, giving a sense of holding steady against the drift of time.

The ephemeral paintings in *Memories and Dreams* explore the intersection of landscape and abstraction, reality and dreams, intimacy and expansiveness, fragility and resilience. "My surroundings always appear in my paintings," Bruno asserts. "These places are filtered through my dreams, and they emerge as paintings."

The power of this show is Bruno's soft, lyrical approach to abstraction, the ambiguity of form, and her restraint and sensitivity, coalescing to allow for a poetic, open-ended meditative experience.

A longtime collector shared her thoughts, "When I saw Bruno's *Pink Stripe*, I was moved to tears, as I am whenever I experience the exquisite illumination and beauty in great works of art. I am overwhelmed by Bruno's ability to capture *the light*, ethereal, unexpected; of this world, but not; a completely personal vision."

"My paintings are authentic. It's who I am, and what I do." —Ragna Bruno  
Bravo!



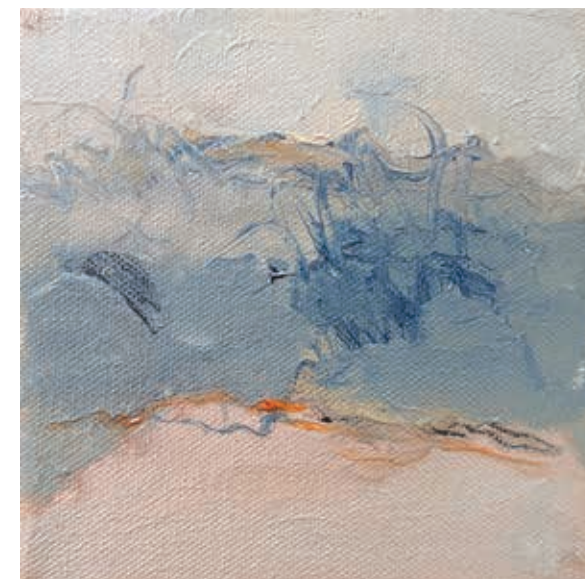
Diptych With Sun A, oil on canvas, 6 x 6 inches



Diptych With Sun B, oil on canvas, 6 x 6 inches



Blue Mountain A, oil on canvas, 5 x 5 inches



Blue Mountain B, oil on canvas, 5 x 5 inches





*Wave, 2025, oil on canvas, 30 x 30 inches*



*Abstraction, 2025, oil on canvas, 30 x 30 inches*





Snow A, 2025, mixed media on Japanese paper, 11.5 x 8.5 inches



Snow B, 2025, mixed media on Japanese paper, 11.5 x 8.5 inches





*Figures*, 2025, mixed media on Japanese paper, 9 x 11.5 inches



*Toro*, 2025, mixed media on Japanese paper, 9 x 11.5 inches



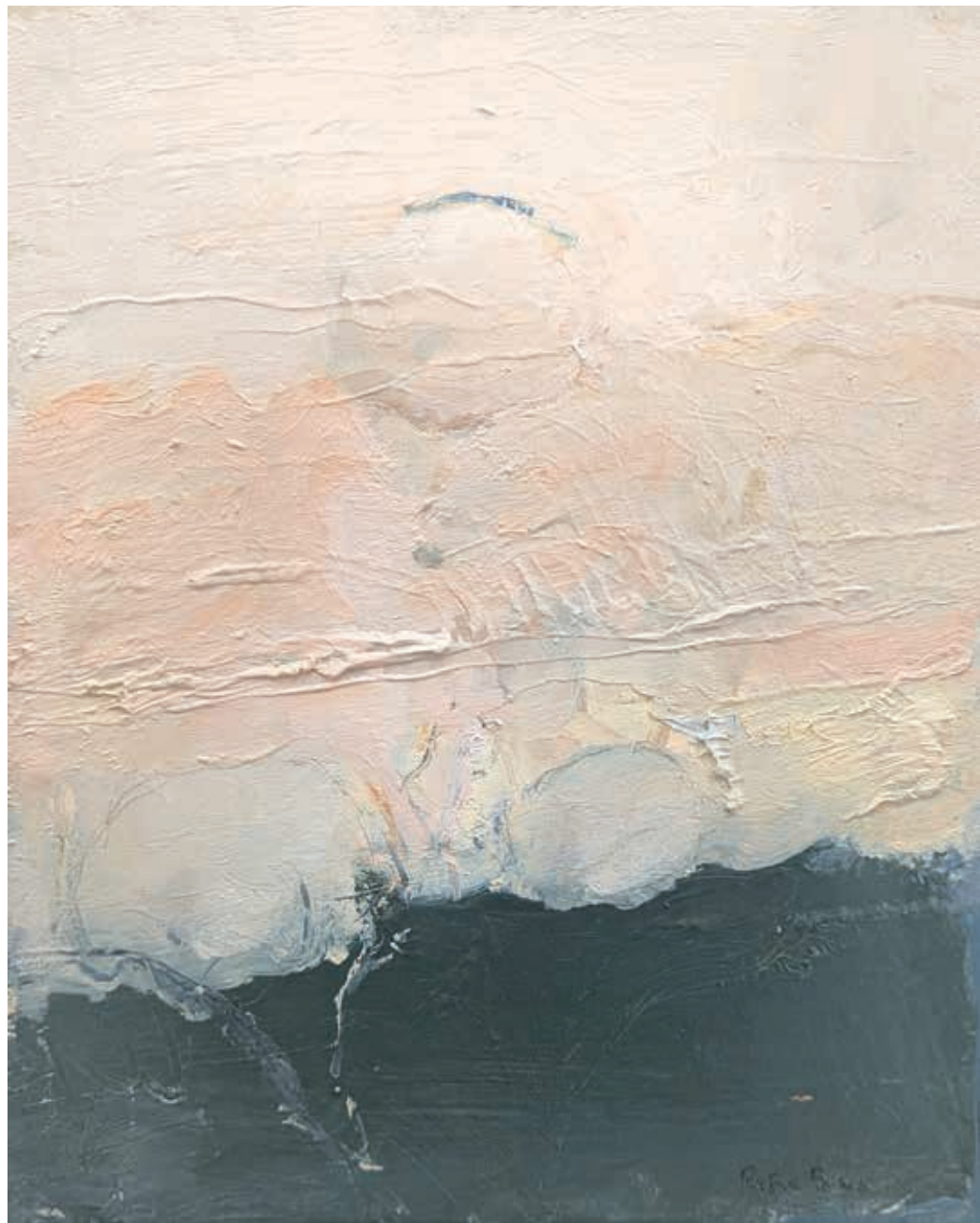


*Niebla A*, 2025, mixed media on Japanese paper, 8 x 10 inches



*Niebla B*, 2025, mixed media on Japanese paper, 8 x 10 inches





*Spheres*, 2025, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches



*Something Green*, 2025, oil on board, 8 x 10 inches





*Full Moon*, 2025, oil on board, 8 x 10 inches



*At the Beach*, 2025, oil on board, 8 x 10 inches





*A Contrast in Blue*, 2025, oil on board, 8 x 10 inches



*Yellow Trees*, 2025, oil on board, 8 x 10 inches





*Orange Landscape*, 2025, oil on board, 10 x 8 inches



*Trees*, 2025, oil on board, 8 x 10 inches





*First Light*, 2024, mixed media on Japanese paper, 8 x 10 inches



*Winter Night*, 2025, mixed media on Japanese paper, 8 x 10 inches

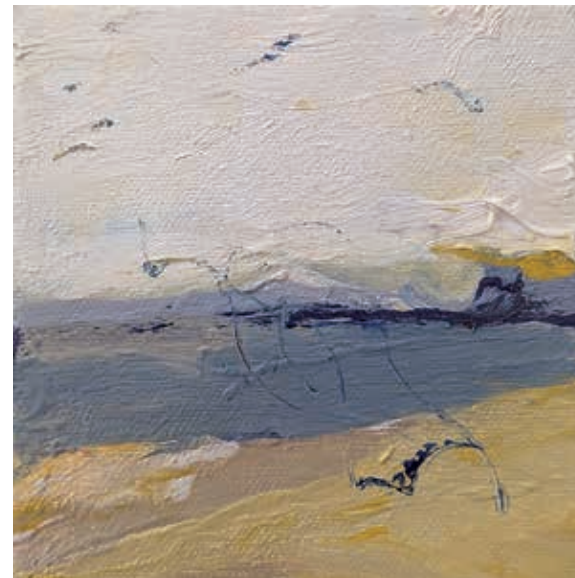




*Abstract 3, oil on canvas, 5 x 5 inches*



*Abstract 3A, oil on canvas, 5 x 5 inches*



*Abstract 1, oil on canvas, 5 x 5 inches*



*Abstract 1A, oil on canvas, 5 x 5 inches*



*Abstract A, oil on canvas, 5 x 5 inches*



*Abstract 2A, oil on canvas, 5 x 5 inches*



*Counterpoint, oil on canvas, 5 x 5 inches*



*Abstraction, oil on canvas, 5 x 5 inches*



# RAGNA BRUNO



PHOTO HILARY BECTON

Ragna Bruno at the opening reception for Memories and Dreams, August, 2025.

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. During the Covid pandemic, Bruno learned Italian.

Throughout her early life, Bruno studied dance, music, and art in Madrid, Switzerland,

and London. Her father, who came from a long line of artists and architects, started as a poet and became a successful businessman. Her mother spoke six languages and enjoyed making sculpture. 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 every day, walking a half hour each way.

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

In 1975, Bruno came to the United States 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, 2021, '23, '25

She-Bear Gallery, Portland, Maine 2014

Husson College, Bangor, Maine 2006

Between the Muse Gallery, Rockland, Maine 1997

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, Maine 2012–2025

Leighton Gallery, Blue Hill, Maine 1984–2011

New York Institute of Technology, New York, New York 2011, 2012

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, 2011

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

Wilkes, Karin. “Memories and Dreams,” exhibition catalog, 2025

Little, Carl. Exhibition Review, *Art New England*, August, 2025

Crosman, Chris. “Conversations in Color,” exhibition catalog, 2023

Wilkes, Katherine. “Between Worlds,” exhibition catalog, 2021

Kany, Daniel. *Maine Sunday Telegram*, July 2013

Jakimides, Annaliese. “Luminescent Subtleties,” exhibition catalog, 2013

Kany, Daniel. “Inner visions,” exhibition catalog, July 2019 “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



Landscape, oil on canvas, 6 x 6 inches





Ragna and her sisters, LEFT TO RIGHT Renate and Diana, who were successful business women; Christina, who was a renowned pianist; and Ragna.





Ragna's parents, Brün and Ena, with Ragna and her brother.

COURTHOUSE GALLERY  
FINE ART