

ART SPIEL

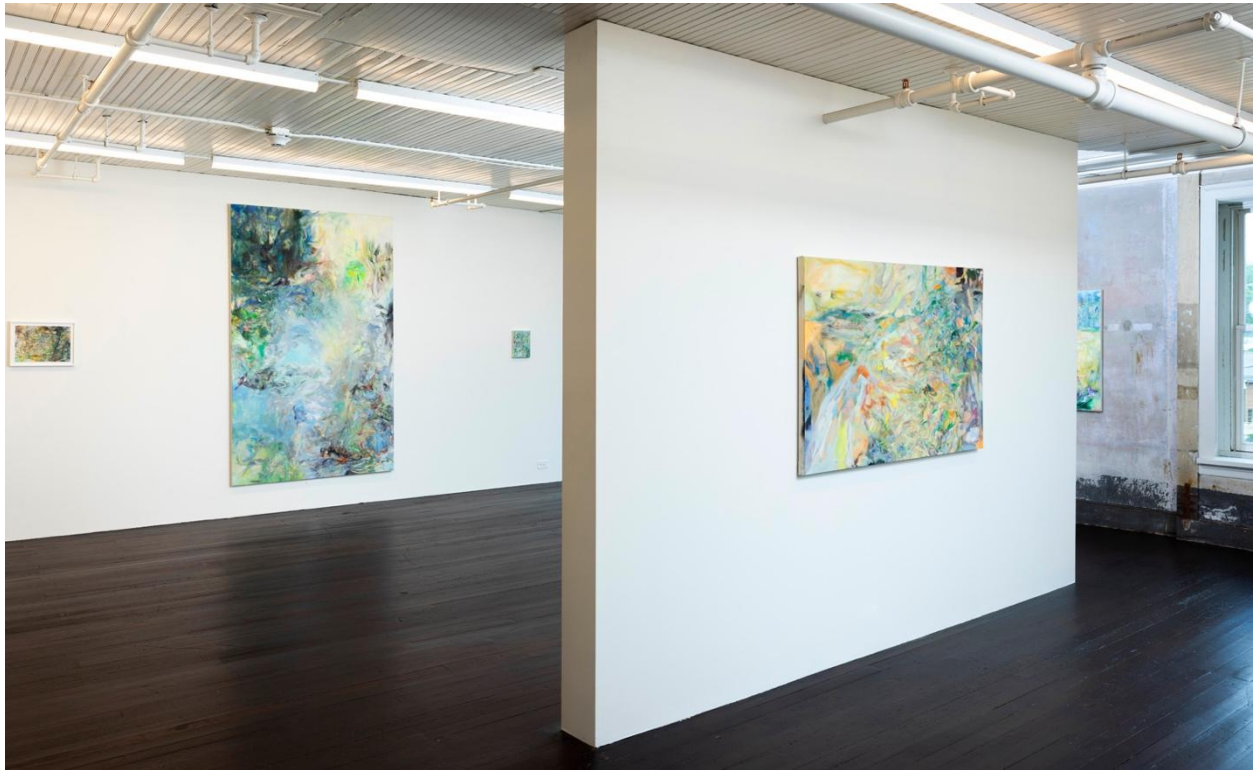
Reflections on the work of contemporary artists

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Ashley Garret: Ambrosia at SEPTEMBER

FEATURED ARTIST



Ambrosia installation view. Photo by Pete Mauney

Ashley Garrett: Ambrosia, Garrett's second solo show at SEPTEMBER in Kinderhook, NY, features a body of work she has made over three years—some evolved over years and others more quickly. Garrett has been working on large-scale 94 x 57-inch paintings on canvas since 2019. Garrett says that the weaving of brushstrokes creates a space that changes perspective between up and down, water and air. The gallery space also offers an experience of movement with sight lines through three distinct rooms. In the installation, small paintings on canvas can be seen from each corner of the rooms to the farthest corners of the gallery.

Tell me about the body of work in this show.

I spent a lot of time listening closely and attending to the dialogue each painting is offering. I work on the paintings until a sense of integration and constant movement happens where all parts of the surface feel touched and attended to. The feeling of being in nature and letting go, breathing, letting air in, releasing, feeling soothed by a breeze, that's what I'm after in these paintings.

Watching the last three years of the realities of climate change from terrible floods and smoky air and the hottest temperatures on record to devastating political events, and the consistency of coming back to nature and the enduring seasons was really meaningful to me. I kept seeing that nature is present, offering us sustenance and we can connect to it any time and be filled by it. I discovered that sense of rejuvenation and relief over and over again across the paintings, through scales, and through shifts in landscape language and abstraction. That persistent sense of growth and transformation is one of the things that keeps us going. I want the work to go to the heart and be present in the heart space. I also want to know how the landscape feels and connect to that place.

Paintings like *Echo* and *Cantations* are about speaking, singing, and listening and what can be heard or felt in the body or on the wind. Other paintings are about perceiving the landscape through the heart space as well as through the eyes. The physical realm through the texture of the surface changes in proximity to the paintings, and the same with the density inside them. The space goes way far back. *Swogan*, *Glittering Belly*, and *Glefiosa* offer vibrating spaces grounded in landscape elements like fields, forests or water bodies with other realms right beneath the surface. In many paintings, I'm working between sections and weaving the spaces together. That knitting or integration creates places that hold the complexity of the inner world and outer world, remaining sensitive to their meeting place – that's the space of the paintings. The concept is for them to be as alive and ever-changing as possible and the dialogue keeps moving inside them, offering many experiences around them.



Swogan, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 x 20 inches

You say that “Spending time in nature, I felt how moving water and air mirrors the flow of internal processes like breathing, dreaming, and thinking. Where do these feelings, the strength of these energetic currents go, where are they met by nature’s pull?” Can you guide us through the show, elaborating on your process with that in mind?

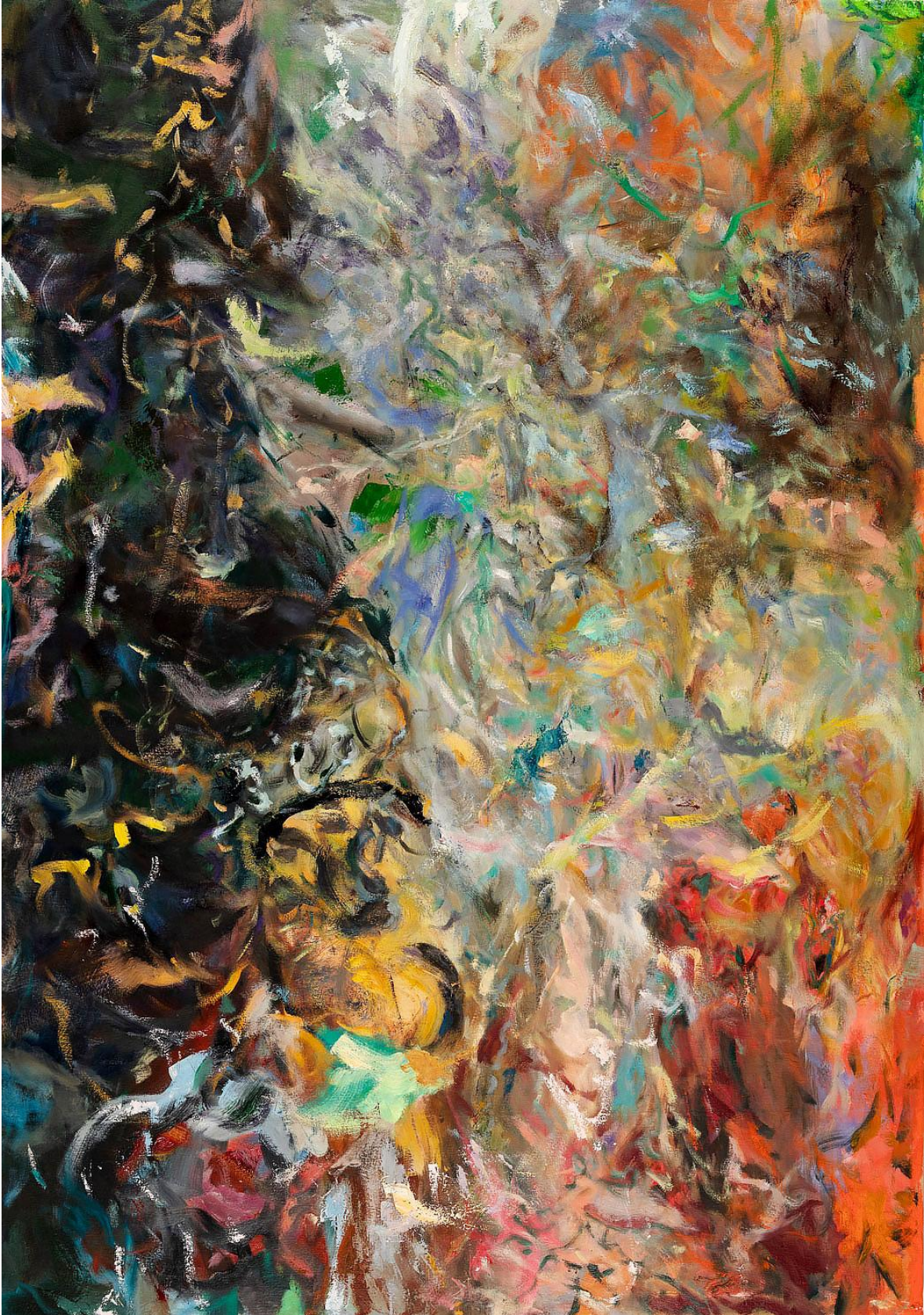
The show starts and ends with two big paintings that hold the space. The largest painting, *Flume*, is in the farthest room to the left of the space. The middle of the painting has a soft quality, inviting the viewer to look down and look up through a landscape space. In all the paintings, it’s about orientation and perception, being invited to move through the space and how the paintings change and evolve. Up close, they give one experience, and further away, they give another, like our inner worlds and feelings. When you enter the gallery, a painting with two flowers branching out from each other, *Wandflowers*, greets you, and the space of the gallery opens and you can enter left or right. *Spira*, the other large-scale painting, is one of the last ones I made for the show. It has an expansive breathing quality where the energy becomes air and is released. Next to it, *Dafne* is a mid-scale painting that draws a fiery and dense, vibrating energy through a vertical axis. I’m thinking a lot about the qualities of awareness and how a painting can contain a structure that both holds together and is continuously flowing, like the experience of seeing nature constantly changing and our constantly changing moods and energy levels.



Spira, 2023, oil on canvas, 77.75 x 59.75 inches

My painting practice is to go out into nature and try not to do anything while I'm there except to be a receiver of experience and presence instead of describing or rendering what's in front of me. Then I come back to the studio and let that experience meet the inner qualities I'm feeling and the work begins to arrive on the canvas. I noticed how the movement of a creek is just like the movement of inner thought and feeling, alive, shimmering, and reflecting light. I wanted to see that as paintings. The texture changes across the paintings too – some are densely packed with energy, vibration, and movement and others have moments of opening up. I love exploring and pushing paintings to reach full aliveness and all the variations of that, it's an infinite discovery.

The paintings in this show offer individual spaces and moments of welcoming rest and refreshment. My goal is for them to be giving an outside-their-edges continuous movement of breathing. Also returning to beauty and hope despite all that is happening around us and how that will always be a motivation in our lives. I love that no matter how awful things are, we can still pause to take in a flower, a sunset, a cloud, or a complete, filling breath. That's what I return to again and again in the paintings, and the show is shaped around that. In the abstract language, there's an invitation to relax and release and allow other things to come through. Going out in nature and coming into ourselves is a continuous practice offering endless refreshment and connection.



Dafne, 2022, oil on canvas 60 x 42 inches

Ashley Garrett: Ambrosia is on view at SEPTEMBER June 10th – August 6th and is part of Upstate Art Weekend July 21st – July 23rd. The artist will be present at the gallery Friday through Sunday 12 – 4pm. SEPTEMBER is located in the Kinderhook Knitting Mill at 4 Hudson Street #3, Kinderhook, NY 12106 around the corner from Jack Shainman's The School.

About the artist: Ashley Garrett graduated with a BFA from the School of Visual Arts in 2008. Solo and two-person exhibitions include SEPTEMBER Gallery (Kinderhook and Hudson, NY), Gold/Scopophilia Gallery (Montclair, NJ), Hood Gallery (Brooklyn, NY), Chase Gallery (West Hartford, CT), SRO (Brooklyn, NY), Six Depot (West Stockbridge, MA), and RISD Memorial Hall Gallery (Providence, RI). She has shown in group exhibitions at the Katonah Museum (Katonah, NY), Torrance Art Museum (Los Angeles, CA), Woodstock Artists Association and Museum (Woodstock, NY), Love Apple Farm (Ghent, NY), Spring/Break Art Show (New York, NY), Ladies' Room (Los Angeles, CA), Regina Rex (New York, NY), The Painting Center (New York, NY), Planthouse (New York, NY), Nurture Art (Brooklyn, NY), Geoffrey Young Gallery (Great Barrington, MA), TSA LA (Los Angeles, CA), Cross Contemporary Art (Saugerties, NY), Church of St Paul the Apostle (New York, NY), and Novella Gallery (New York, NY). Her work has been reviewed in *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Two Coats of Paint*, and *Painting is Dead*. Recent publications include *Ashley Garrett: Tarot Images* and *Co-Configurative Eternities*, in which poets read and respond to her paintings.