

THREADING IT TOGETHER

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Broadway Gallery's recent group exhibition, *Translucent Threads*, curated by Basak Malone, features a talented group of international artists whose works thread together conceptual practices with material practices, excavating memory and lived experience in order to distill the essences of these immaterial events into translucent images that glow, vibrate, and reverberate together in unexpected and magical ways. Evoking an array of psychological notes, this exhibition enables viewers to rest, reflect, meditate, and celebrate, instilling a range of emotional responses.



Jacob Alexander, *Love*, 2008. Mixed-Media on Drywall. Courtesy of the artist.

One such feeling is passion, as demonstrated by the work of Minneapolis based artist, Jacob Alexander, whose multi-media abstract creations fuse futurist landscapes with dreamscapes, incorporating decadent color and exuberant design elements. Works on view such as *Poseidon*, 2009, and *Path of Passion*, 2009, reflect a sense of transformation, ethereality, and individuality that are among the most profound threads of life. Yet, not all the work is so dense. More esoteric and luminous in ambience are the three works that comprise *The Key to Life is Love* collectively. This triptych is more dispersed composition of delicately floating stains of pale aquamarines, pinks, violets, and yellows. These works in particular channel his fellow post-abstract expressionist, Ingrid Calame, who like Alexander, contends with the splatters and stains of action painting through a graphic, traced, and contoured approach to form.

Meanwhile, New York-based sculptor, Matt Callinan, presents his *Origins* series mobiles made from deconstructed plastic bottles. Bringing to mind Calder, these weightless and ethereal forms are suspended from the ceiling, innovatively encouraging the viewer to extend her gaze upwards. Using pre-fabricated materials that are usually perceived as trash, he re-envisioned them as organic forms found in nature, such as jellyfish, flowers, or water, giving these translucent materials a new life. By capturing the transcendental essence of the organic forms of nature, he enables them to be thread back into the woven texture of daily life.

Similarly, the Italian painter, Mara Corfini also explores the elusive translucent threads emanat-

ing from nature. In her delicate watercolor landscapes, such as *Sunset*, 2002, from her *Australia* series, her fluid and saturated strokes caress the painting surface to create an image depicting palms silhouetted against a backdrop of sea and sunset, allowing colors from azure and periwinkle to melon and crimson to intermingle in a rich quasi-abstract that is reminiscent of Gauguin's tropical landscapes. Here the transparency of light emanates through her willowy strokes, evoking the warmth and heat of the sun and fluid coolness of the water.

New-York based Sara Wight also explores landscape. Yet, instead of warm sunsets, she confronts cold, abandoned landscapes in her *Beyond the Horizon* photographic series, which in their minimalism

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almost become abstractions. Attesting to the spiritual transcendence made tangible through the deserted landscape, Wight examines spaces where humanity (a few lone figures) meets the vast expanses of the void, an existential exercise in searching for the meaning of existence. This is her translucent thread.

Israeli artist, Rachel Eshet approaches the theme of translucent threads literally in her arresting acrylic on canvas painting, *Roots*, 2008, which depicts an anonymous cartoon-like child set against a backdrop of vibrant patterning and sinuous, curving “threads”—one of piano keys and one of multicolored bars. Executed in her unique “embroidery with a brush” style, the image is lively and vivacious, reminding one of sewing with needle and thread and of the translucence of vivid multihued light. Here she sews together elements of the unconscious in an indelible image of color, pattern, and light that is simultaneously cheerfully bubbly and darkly surreal.

Like Eshet, Swedish painter, Erica



Erica Ronnbeck, *Mother*. Courtesy of the artist.

Rönnbäck, also interweaves the translucent threads of figuration with abstract decorative elements. In *Mother*, 2009, she combines two exquisitely rendered figures—a mother and daughter embracing—with abstracted patterning. Yet, unlike Eshet, her images are somehow more wistful and nostalgic, her palette softer—pinks, grays, beiges, moss greens—and her mood more somber.

Paraguay-born, Swiss-raised, artist Thomas Sarbach also plays with figuration—as well as with unusual media—in his dexterous oil and gold-leaf on canvas paintings, *The Golden Calf*, 2009, and *Mangosteen*, 2009—one depicting a bright fruit, and one depicting a calf before a grand sun—which emanate a lucent glowing aura of golden yellows which make a prescient commentary on the transcendent spirit of the soul.

The radiant quality of light is a ubiquitous theme in the exhibition, one dealt with masterfully by New-York based artist, Kilo, who investigates luminosity through abstraction rather than figuration. His backlit photograph from his *Color Rays* series displays an enigmatic swirl of pure energy in concentric yellow whirls of light. These

translucent threads reveal the spiritual “life within objects” exposing the true life force within us all. Through his process of “digital alchemy” Kilo’s images buzz with the forces of the unseen that resonate with and complement the play on light evoked by Sarbach’s work, next to which it is placed.

Similarly, Margareta Petré explores the effervescence and spirit of light through her Rothko-esque canvases of pure light and color. Her pink and orange study from her *Colour Energies* series is a particular standout. Like her other large-scale paintings, the image depicts a rosy white light at the center of the composition that fades outward into a palette that ranges from peaches to sherbets. Her approach to painting is one that confronts immaterial qualities, such as speed, vibration, light, and energy. Her canvases glow with a spiritual Zen-like energy that is calming, yet dazzling. Like the translucent threads of the sun’s rays, these images are striking and stunning.

Also arresting are the works of Romanian-born, Swiss-based painter, Georgeta Stefanescu, whose mixed-media diptych, *Signature*, 2006, explores the fluidity of the materiality of paint itself. Her two sister images analyze the brushstroke itself, one in shades of blue, and one, in reds and blacks. Through her own experimentation with paint, she constructs a relationship between the painted surface and the movements of the paint itself, exploring along the way, the transparency of the material and its many translucent threads.

Lastly, Irish-Flemish artist, Mieke Vanmechelen also explores the materiality of paint, and reconciles its translucence with its viscosity. Reminiscent of both O’Keefe and Kandinsky, Vanmechelen’s sumptuous abstract canvases are the epitome of the concept of the show. In fact, her title piece, *Translucent Threads*, 2009, with its luminescent strokes of mauves, aquamarines, blacks, and ochres, references not just the land, sky, and sea, but something more ethereal and otherworldly.

Ultimately, this is the essence of this exhibition—an otherworldly voyage into the unknown that plunges the depths of the subconscious, and the heights of our inspirational dreams, indulging our whimsical free spirits into a realm that is both visionary and contemplative, experimental and studied, and where all the threads of life merge into a united fabric of experience and existence. □