



LOCKSGALLERY

ART SPIEL

Contemporary Art and Culture

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Art Spiel Picks: Philly Exhibitions in October 2024

Sometimes, we are confronted with artwork that hums with possibilities so profound you can feel them taking root in your chest and making a new home. You stand in the gallery, soaking it in, and you want to share it with as many people as possible. That said, I hope you take a good chunk of time to sink into the transcendent earthy abstractions of Warren Rohrer at Locks Gallery. Afterward, head upstairs and marvel, open-mouthed, at the unexpected forms created by sculptors Hanne Friis and Lynda Benglis. Then, journey over to Fleisher/Ollman Gallery and get lost in Sarah Gamble's glittering forest interiors and interdimensional abstractions, filled with mystery and magic.

Warren Rohrer: *Return to Land* at Locks Gallery @locksgallery

On view through: November 30, 2024



Whether you are a fan of color field paintings or not, Warren Rohrer's colossal gradients will draw you in and hold you with their quietly shifting hues. Originally from Lancaster, PA, Rohrer's work is inspired by his childhood in a Mennonite farming community, the rhythm of agriculture, and the land. He once explained, "I'm fueled by the 'beat' of the paint application, which is almost like a sowing or chopping rhythm. It's a kind of primitive language about the nature of things." In his work, these "beats" are often expressed by gridded dashes and dots that subtly transition in color, pulling the viewer's gaze across the canvas.

Rohrer's entrancing technique of applying soft earth tones over brighter hues creates spaces that are truly hypnotic. Over the years, the grids become less pronounced, but the dotted layers of color remain in organic clouds that pulse with misty energy. These paintings activate space and create optical shimmers. I found myself grinning like a small child into a cloud of green and purple that ebbed and flowed, turning before my eyes. Scrawled on top of some of his earthen color fields are marks reminiscent of ancient calligraphy; they feel primal and magical, like lost languages that speak of the earth. Take the time to see these luminous works before they come down; they are the quintessential example of work that has to be experienced.

Hanne Friis / Lynda Benglis at Locks Gallery @locksgallery

On view through: November 30, 2024



Hanne Friis and Lynda Benglis are two powerhouses of the sculptural world, both obsessed with process and material exploration. This show, spanning the second floor of Locks Gallery, will subvert your expectations of materials and demonstrate the power of sculptural abstraction.

Hanne Friis twists, folds, and gathers hand-dyed cloth into nebulous organic forms that transcend the limitations of fabric, becoming heavy, dense objects with their own materiality. Her process is laborious and very physical, requiring thousands of stitches using a tiny needle and nylon thread. Yet the forms created feel effortless and natural. The accumulation of folds is strikingly unfamiliar, forming swirling lines that dance across each sculpture in patterns of tight turns and soft bulges. Several figurative body-sized sculptures hang from the ceiling, like cocoons or spectral creatures. Smooth tendrils of cloth complement the masses of entangled fabric. The intricate patterns of Friis' amorphous forms feel in flux as if they are subtly moving. Her free-standing and hanging wall sculptures are reminiscent of stone, wood, or slowly solidifying lava extruded from an ocean vent. The ambiguity created is mesmerizing.



A post-minimalist legend, Lynda Benglis is celebrated for creating dynamic sculptures that defy the rigidity of industrial materials. This show presents work from multiple stages of her career, featuring sculptures made from various metals, ceramics, cast acrylic, and wax. In contrast to Friis's sculptures, which make soft materials seem hard and heavy, Benglis makes hard materials feel soft, light, and easily malleable. Her wire mesh wall sculptures of bows, fans, and knots are plated in metal, and appear to hang weightlessly like crumpled paper or rope effortlessly mounted on the wall. I was particularly entranced by the bronze sculpture *B-witched*, which ripples and swirls as if the artist froze molten metal mid-pour. Its wave shape beckons you to look within and around it, marveling at its undulating surface.