

rachel uffner maake



Shara in her studio in Brooklyn. Photo by Liz Goldman.

Shara Hughes studied painting at the Rhode Island School of Design earning her BFA in 2004. Immediately after graduating from RISD, she has attended residencies across the country at the Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass CO, the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson VT, OxBow in Saugatuck MI. From there Shara had her first solo show at Rivington Arms in 2007. Shara has spent two summers in Denmark at a studio house under Mikael Andersen Gallery producing work for shows in both Scandinavia and Berlin in 2008 and 2009. From there, she moved to Atlanta GA. In 2011, Shara attended the Skowhegan School of painting and sculpture. The following year, Shara attended the Lighthouse Works residency in Fishers Island, NY in 2012. Hughes recently studied with master artist Dana Schutz at the Atlantic Center for the Arts in February of 2014. While in Atlanta Shara had two major solo shows at the Atlanta Contemporary Arts Center in April of 2013, and at the MOCA GA in April 2014. Both shows received reviews in *Modern Painters* and *Art in America* respectively. Currently, Shara Hughes lives and works in Brooklyn NY and was just featured as the Spotlight artist in *New American Paintings* issue 118.

Rachel Uffner Gallery
170 Suffolk Street
New York, NY 10002

+1 212 274 0064
info@racheluffnergallery.com
racheluffnergallery.com

Artist Statement

Shara Hughes' new paintings present layers of abstracted, actual and pictorial space, all in search of simplicity.

These clouded windows of ambiguous form, pattern, and texture are like vibrated, vibrant drawings, plied with multiple mediums. The direct intention instilled in each mark empowers these paintings with a sense of focused purpose, directness, yet they depict suggestions of open space, floating moons, flowing rivers, melting snow. The indirect and the slow burning.

Hughes explores these ideas as she quickly grasps new ways of applying paint. Idea becomes form, form becomes an idea, image becomes both. The result is a mix of peace and purpose; material and place; raw canvas and painted surface. Transparency and brick wall.

In these works past and future disappear. There is only the present. Invention, intention, playfulness and trust. All happen then/now. Stop to go.

Artist Interview:

Can you give us some insight into your process? How do you begin? Do you keep a sketchbook/does drawing play a part in your work?

Much of my recent work is based on the process of drawing, but I don't usually pull from direct sketches or drawings. I like the confidence of mark making when producing a work on paper. The paper is not very forgiving, so there isn't much leniency if you make mistakes. In painting, it can be easier to 'erase' in a way. You can go back into something and muscle it out, whereas on paper, your mistakes are more visible. The landscapes I'm making are based on these kind of ideas of confidence in mark making. In the same vein, I usually don't have a plan at all. Each piece is completely from my head. Each mark is intuitive until the piece is resolved.

You mentioned in your statement that in your work the past and future disappear and there is only the present. How do you interact with the present while in the studio? How do you get to a mental state where you are fully immersed in the present?

As I mentioned in the previous question, the process is very intuitive. When I'm not in my studio I can't think about making paintings. I need to be in front of the work to be completely in the moment of making. I like to have this on the fly feeling because I feel like it comes from the most honest part of being an artist to me. When you can be in conversation with the work that closely there is a nice energy that makes the work somehow vibrate.

You mention that playfulness is an important element in your work. How do you incite playfulness, and what do you do when it does not naturally occur?

I think it's hard to decide to be playful. There's so many edges you have to be on to make work playful. You have to be aware of yourself, aware of the viewer, and aware of another type of freedom from both of those participants. To be 'playful' in the work I feel like you have to let go naturally. Deciding to do that is very hard, so I feel like it just takes practice. Maybe it's more about practicing to accept your mistakes.

Does a level of the subconscious play a part in your process?

Yes completely. But being aware of your subconscious in the same way. It's not as hippie as it seems though. I feel like I'm too serious about it to be that loosey-goosey about it.

Your work successfully merges abstract and representational forms—do you look at source material or references when you create a composition?

Not really. I look at artist books in my studio all the time, but in the recent work, I like it to have more of a feeling of this landscape being a real location, but only in dreams.

Your work varies dramatically in scale—what interests you most about working small vs working large?

I'm most comfortable working large. I like that I can have a wider range of brush sizes and marks just because there is more surface to play with. But I like the smaller ones because they are harder to make. Surprisingly the smaller ones take way longer than the large ones. Sometimes they won't be fully resolved for months where a larger piece could come together in a few days.

I am drawn to the vivid colors and the push/pull of the different textures and tactile elements in your paintings—has that always been a part of your work? What are your favorite materials to work with in tandem and why?

Yes. I have always used this feeling of collage through different ways to use paint. Texture, pattern, and perspective is something I like to use to describe a space in ways that maybe don't always make sense. I've recently been using an airbrush which is a vast way to work. I'm into using materials in ways they aren't normally used as well. Sometimes the crusty old paint is more valuable to me than the juicy smooth ones. Its more about how to know the range of your tools.

Can you describe the evolution of your mark-making and response to different media? Was there a point where you felt as though you pushed through a tough barrier with your work?—an 'aha moment' of sorts?

Hmm... good question. I feel like when I started making sculptures I had a moment where I let go of trying to 'build sculptures' and just make paintings in 3D. The sculptures come together in a way the paintings do. They both come together in more of a collage of many materials making a whole.

Has your work been influenced by other disciplines that aren't rooted in the visual arts?

I don't know. I guess everything comes from your own life, but I wouldn't necessarily say my taekwondo practice is linked to making landscapes.

What is the best advice you could give to emerging artists?

Try not to listen to anyone. Ha.

What do you listen to while you work? Any music or podcasts we should check out?

I listen to a broad range of music. Depends on the mood. You know, hits of the 90s or something.

Thank you so much for taking the time to share your work and talk with us!

To find out more about Shara and her work, check out her **website**.