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Winter arts

guide

GALLERIES | CATE MCQUAID

Joanne Greenbaum presents her work with flying colors

By Cate McQuaid | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT FEBRUARY 07, 2018

Cobalt blue, blood orange, honeysuckle pink: antidotes to midwinter drudgery.

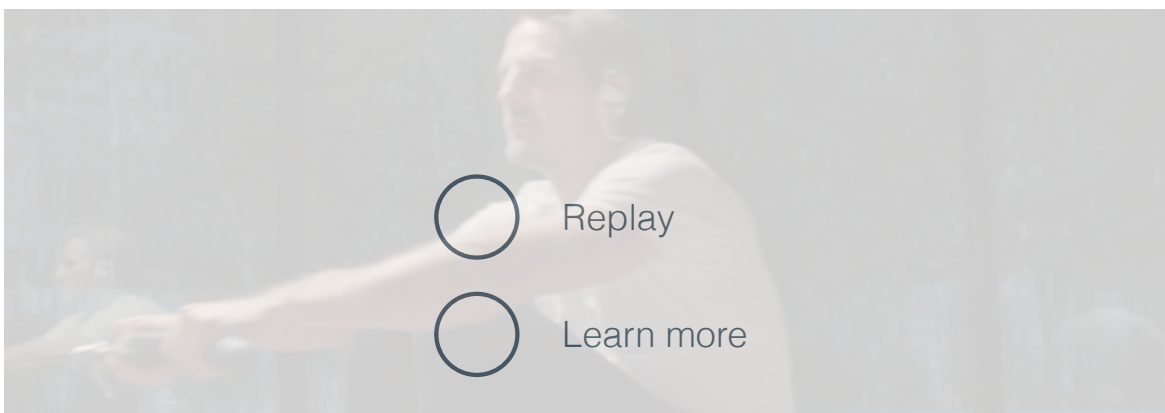
Painter Joanne Greenbaum's jolting colors will entice viewers into her exhibition at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University. Spend time, though, and you'll see the works are more than just deliciously tropical. They're agitated, in constant motion.



TUFTS ART GALLERIES AND JOANNE GREENBAUM

**An untitled work from 2017 in
"Joanne Greenbaum: Things We Said
Today."**

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The exhibit marks a refreshing course change for the SMFA gallery under Dina Deitsch, the new director and chief curator of Tufts galleries — less scrupulously conceptual, more tangible, sensual, and attending to the roots of craft.

Greenbaum is among a generation of women painters — Carrie Moyer and Amy Sillman are others — reclaiming abstract expressionism. Their works are messy, giddy, seductive, and in Greenbaum’s case, nervously animated.

She starts with formal scaffolding, then assails it with marks: confetti-like dots, crayon scribbles, brushy swipes.

In the biggest, most dizzying painting, she lays foundation with meandering blue, flat and sliced like the remains of a cut-paper project, and inundates it with drips, swipes, and scrawls, each section offering a new tension. A ghostly pink form quivers in the middle.

Greenbaum’s sculptures move her painterly color and mark to three dimensions. They sit around the edge of a big table, some jauntily architectonic, others squishy and organic. Written over with marker or blushing with tone, they might be people at a business meeting with their insides turned out. Freaky, lurid, endearing.

The show's title, "Things We Said Today," references a Beatles love song. But it's really about the flywheel of life, spinning yesterday, today, and tomorrow, and in one painting, a gleaming copper wheel overflows the canvas. Tiny percussive dots tremble and stray in the white spaces between the fleshy spokes, and a cyclone of color turns at the wheel's axle.

The painting has one still point, hovering on the right of the cyclone: a dab of pink topped with red, like a blown kiss. Its landing has set everything in motion.

JOANNE GREENBAUM: Things We Said Today

At School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University, 230 The Fenway, through April 7. 617-627-0047, smfa.tufts.edu/events-exhibits/galleries

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