

ARTFORUM



Ever Baldwin, *A Brave Face*, 2021, oil on canvas in carved and charred wood frame, 32 x 24 x 5".

LOS ANGELES

Ever Baldwin

EMMA GRAY HQ

Private residence near Santa Monica/Venice border. Please email for address:

info@emmagrayhq.com

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The seven abstract paintings on display in Ever Baldwin's first West Coast exhibition include a hand-built sculptural frame for each work. Baldwin integrates the image and its external support like other contemporary artists—including Alex Anderson and Stephanie Temma Hier—whose approach to framing becomes a fundamental aspect of the artwork. While Baldwin clearly demarcates the chunky wooden enclosure from the picture, they often make

these elements formally contiguous by extending shapes and patterns from the painting directly into the surrounding structure. The armatures are built raw: Grinder marks are visible and nail heads are easy to spot; curves and angles are coarsely crafted. The wood is blackened with soot in Baldwin's homespun variation of the Japanese technique *shou sugi ban*; in places the ash has rubbed off from handling.

The images are roughly bilaterally symmetrical and rendered in a style that eschews polish, in harmony with the framing. Baldwin overpaints heavily, resulting in gritty surfaces and muted colors. Yet in places a glowing light source is depicted, wonderfully illuminating the composition's surrounding forms. There is an echo of Arthur Dove here, often through the suggestion of landscape, though Baldwin's tableaux equally call forth the human body's internal and external morphologies. One work suggests a visage seen simultaneously in profile and frontally (*A Brave Face*) while another put me in mind of an animal's head, perhaps that of a lioness (*Glory*, both works 2021).

Yet Baldwin's point doesn't seem to be mimesis. This work feels oriented toward the mystical, using organic forms as the pathway to a spiritual realm. The artist has not so much created paintings as votive objects. I imagine them hanging in some cultic place of worship, where the frames have been blackened by generations of candlelight.

—Daniel Gerwin

The New York Times

What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now

Ever Baldwin

Through Aug. 13. Marinaro, 678 Broadway, Manhattan; 212-989-7700, marinaro.biz.



Ever Baldwin's "New Fit" (2022), in the exhibition "Quiet Yes" at Marinaro. via Ever Baldwin and Marinaro, New York

This touching show introduces Manhattan to the wry, visionary paintings of Ever Baldwin, a 44-year-old artist, who has worked primarily as a sculptor. Creating a pure yet eroticized semiabstract presence seems to be the goal of these richly colored, symmetrical compositions of curling, swelling shapes. Suggestions of faces, torsos, body parts abound, as well as landscapes, garments and architecture. Spheres function as both eyes and breasts, buttocks as hills; vulvas as pathways. Adding to the painted action are blackened hand-carved frames whose knobs, curves and curlicues insinuate further physiognomic and decorative detail. Fireplaces, altarpieces, haunted mirrors and puppet theaters also enter the mix.

In “New Fit,” a demonic face or mask is defined by burning red eyes, while a pair of bent off-white tree trunks and two ellipses of vivid blue account for nose and cheeks; below them the frame serves as bow-tie lips, tightly closed. In “Split Reed,” a double scoop of lavender with a high notched collar of deep yellow framing an orange orb might be a bowing priest. The frame adds another head and shoulders and enormous fingers (six to a side) that thrust the painting toward us.

Baldwin is indebted to the early American modernism of painters like Marsden Hartley, Arthur Dove and Georgia O’Keeffe as well as Charles Demuth’s poster portraits, especially his great 1928 “I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold” in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The conviction that forms have meaning verges on overheated but is leavened by wit. *ROBERTA SMITH*