

# LIFE & ARTS

## On Exhibit: At Union, the glowing works of Jane Swavely

Her brushstrokes conjure a strange, vivid and sometimes ultraviolet brilliance

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An exhibition shot of "Jane Swavely" at the Mandeville Gallery.

PHOTOGRAPHER: INDIANA NASH/STAFF WRITER

With glowing shades of darks and lights, the natural and the alien come together in "Jane Swavely" at Union College's Mandeville Gallery.

Whether it's the bioluminescent greens in "Green Screen #2" or the startling purples in "Untitled #Aa," Swavely's brushstrokes conjure a strange, vivid and sometimes ultraviolet brilliance.

Some paintings seem almost toxic, with blinding shades of yellows and greens; while some echo more natural elements, with deep earthy browns or shimmering blues.

The New York City-based artist is known for her abstract works, many of which are featured in public and private collections, including the JP Morgan Chase Art Collection and the Allentown Art Museum in Pennsylvania. Swavely is a member of the A.I.R. Gallery in Brooklyn, where she had a solo show about two years ago.

Though she doesn't necessarily identify as a conceptual painter, the viewer itches to attach a narrative of some kind to her glowing works; to cull meaning from the sometimes wispy and other times distinctive brushstrokes that give each work an intense sense of movement.

Opening the show is "Jinx," which leans more toward the alien than the natural, with a mix of highlighter yellow and green flowing down the center of the piece. On the sides are sections of brooding shades of browns and blacks, mixed with ghostly hints of greens.

Nearby hangs a painting that leans more toward the natural, with silver and gray clouding the left side of the canvas while a mountainous shape of greys and greens commands the right.

While her works are abstract, they're also influenced by the artistic landscape tradition, capturing an intersection between the natural and the supernatural.

This is perhaps most clear in two sweeping paintings, "Untitled #Aa" and "Untitled #Bb." In the former, dark purples contrast with vibrant pinks and ultraviolet colors. The colors seem like something out of a science fiction film but the composition is reminiscent of traditional landscapes, as is the case for the darker, perhaps more brooding "Untitled #Bb."

In each of Swavely's works, there is a stark juxtaposition with extreme splashes of dark and light hues, and the artist often uses one to highlight the other, bringing almost equal attention to each.

That's certainly the case in "Will-o'-the-wisp," which brings together a strip of the familiar vivid yellow and green with a murky, almost smoky mix of browns and soft yellows. Both sides serve to draw the eye to the other, creating light in even the darker section and shading viewers from the intensity of the brighter section.

"Jane Swavely" delivers a fresh take on the abstract medium with pieces that are glowing with movement and life, both natural and unnatural.

There will be a reception from 5-6:30 p.m. tonight at the Mandeville Gallery, on the second floor of the Nott Memorial (807 Union Street). The exhibition will be up through June 14. For more info visit [union.edu/gallery](http://union.edu/gallery).