

Diverging Duo

THE ANITA Shapolsky Gallery in New York will show the works of two 20th century artists, Ernest Briggs (1923-1984) and Jon Schueler (1916-1992), this month in an exhibition titled “Divergent Paths.” The gallery will also show the works of contemporary Brooklyn-based painter Derek Buckner in the upstairs gallery space.

Briggs and Schueler were both prolific painters who studied around the same time at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco. Learning from influential paint-

ers of the time like Richard Diebenkorn, Mark Rothko, and most importantly, Clyfford Still, Briggs and Schueler both painted in the impasto technique in their early paintings and owed much of their styles to Still’s influence.

At Still’s invitation, both of the painters had moved to New York by 1953, where they quickly joined the city’s avant garde. While here, their paths—in both art and life—diverged.

Briggs remained in New York, continuing to explore abstraction and expressionism through his paintings. Schueler, however, moved to Scotland and began painting works that explored nat-

ural subjects—through a combination of the abstract and figurative. In his *Western Landscape* (1955), a bright blue sky is filled with dynamic, richly-hued clouds that seem to billow across the canvas. *The Cruaich* (1958), on the other hand, is an abstract landscape marked by almost violent paintstrokes surrounding a gestural sweep of red in the center.

Briggs’s paintings continued to develop in both form and use of color. “His early paintings displayed both dynamism and discord within strong, lyrical colors and seemingly wild displays of emotion,” says the gallery’s spokesperson in a press release. “Later his work was

characterized by a more geometric, hard-edged styling, muted color palette, focusing on the material, natural qualities of paintings and permeated with a deeply reflective personal metaphor.”

This evolution can be seen clearly in his *Untitled* work from September of 1958. This oil on canvas makes use of the splatter technique, as well as evokes the intense emotion of the painter through the use of a bold color palette, largely red and black. In the slightly later *Untitled* work from 1960, we see a composition that is more formal and restrained.

Viewers who also visit the upstairs gallery will be able to see Buckner’s work, which is deeply grounded in his home borough of Brooklyn, and especially the industrial land- and waterscapes of the Gowanus Canal. In *Shipping Cranes at Dusk* (2022), we see a moody, atmospheric depiction of the canal with all the industrial trappings of smoke, scaffolding, and barges. In the foreground, a small boat with two human figures adds a softer, more natural element to the composition.



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ANITA SHAPOLSKY GALLERY

DIVERGENT PATHS

Selected paintings by **ERNEST BRIGGS** and **JON SCHUELER**,
and urban landscapes by **DEREK BUCKNER**.

April 6th – June 3rd, 2023



Jon Schueler, December '68, Chester, CT, 1968,
oil on canvas, 71" x 76.5"



Ernest Briggs, Untitled, 7/12/1959,
oil on canvas, 49.5" x 39.5"



Derek Buckner, Port Cranes, Harbor, 2022,
oil on canvas, 24" x 36"

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