



TOP LEFT: *No One is Home*, 2006.
TOP RIGHT: *Air: 24 Hours, Eleven P.M.*, 1991-92.
BOTTOM LEFT AND RIGHT: *Amagansett Diptych #1*, 2007-08.



dueling brushes

RENOWNED AMERICAN ARTIST JENNIFER BARTLETT, WHOSE WORK THOUGHTFULLY WEAVES REALISM WITH THE ABSTRACT, GETS AN AMBITIOUS RETROSPECTIVE OF HER GROUNDBREAKING ART. BY ALEXANDRA LESHNER

“Fun and difficult” is how Jennifer Bartlett describes her experience as an emerging female artist in the late 1960s, but the California-born painter and sculptor quickly became a pioneer for women in the art community. As a tribute, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts will host “Jennifer Bartlett: History of the Universe—Works 1970–2011,” a traveling exhibition of more than 30 pieces spanning her acclaimed career.

Recognized for her ever-shifting style, Bartlett defies boundaries by combining elements of abstraction, impressionism, and realism to create work that makes an impact—on both critics and the public. “Jennifer, from the very beginning of her career, has always shown tremendous personal discipline in her quest to push painting further and to make her mark in the contemporary art world,” says Sueyun Locks, director of Washington Square’s Locks Gallery, which has represented Bartlett since 1995. “It’s been exciting to share her work over such a long period—especially an artist whose work has continually evolved and been so influential to younger generations.”

The complex, experimental nature of her art is perhaps a factor in

Bartlett’s success: In taking a novel approach, she set herself apart. “When her monumental painting *Rhapsody* was initially shown in May 1976, it was regarded as a tour de force postmodern pastiche that, with unprecedented intellectual and visual acuity, presented her groundbreaking vision that all painting styles and forms are equally valid and available for artistic appropriation,” says Klaus Ottmann, the exhibition’s curator and director of the Center for the Study of Modern Art at The Phillips Collection in DC.

Included in the exhibit are some of Bartlett’s most well-regarded pieces, such as *Air: 24 Hours, Eleven P.M.*, from a series of 24 oil paintings, each documenting an hour of the day; a large diptych from her Amagansett series of panoramic ocean views; the lush, green *Grasses*, which reflects her passion for gardens; and a selection of her Word Paintings, which Ottmann counts among his favorites. “Visitors,” he says, “are going to experience an unprecedented philosophical depth and stylistic breadth.” *June 27–October 13 at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts’ Samuel M.V. Hamilton Building, 128 N. Broad St., 215-972-7600; pafa.org/Bartlett* **PS**