

An abstract painting with a warm, monochromatic color palette of oranges, yellows, and reds. The composition is dominated by vertical, textured brushstrokes that create a sense of depth and movement. In the lower-left quadrant, a faint, stylized figure is visible, possibly a woman in a long dress, rendered in a lighter, more ethereal tone. The overall effect is one of intense, layered color and expressive texture.

DARLA BJORK

Dawn Paintings: Internal Landscape

1. **OVERLOOK**, 24 inches x 24 inches (front cover) 2004.
3. **UNTITLED #8**, 24 inches X 24 inches, 2004.
5. **MASKING/UNMASKING**, 28 inches X 36 inches, 1999.
6. **THE CAVE**, 40 inches X 40 inches, 2003.
7. **UNTITLED #9**, 22 inches X 22 inches, 2004.
8. **UNTITLED IN BLUE**, 48 inches X 48 inches, 2004.
9. **DANCE**, 48 inches X 48 inches, 2004.
10. **UNTITLED #6**, 8 inches X 10 inches, oil on wood, 2004.
11. **MEADOWS**, 48 inches X 48 inches, 2004.
12. **UNTITLED #7**, 24 inches X 24 inches (back cover), 2004.

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C H E L S E A

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Tuesday - Saturday, 12-6pm

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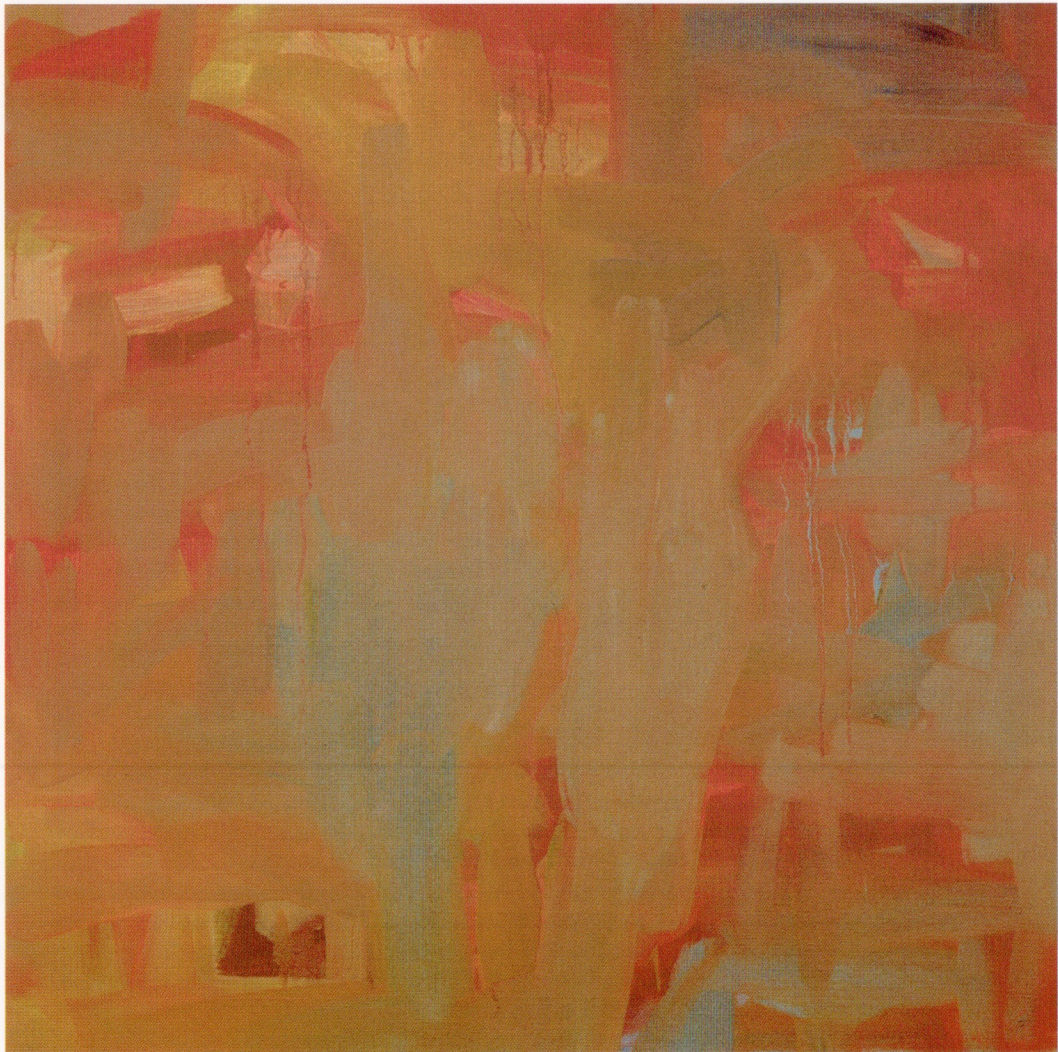
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Dawn Paintings: Internal Landscape

Darla Bjork's suite of paintings, *Internal Landscape*, is a meditation on open space, landscape, and light. Bjork celebrates the generosity of nature, the luminescence of sunrise and sunset. With this work, Bjork finds the sensuous abandon possible in the act of painting and the clarity manifest through such abandon—a liberation of the self possible through artistic creation.

In *Masking/Unmasking* (p.5), the 1999 self-portrait that Bjork has chosen to include in this catalogue, she asks, can we risk the truer self, the greater self-revelation. In this double/d self-portrait, a turning point in the artist's work, Bjork, acknowledging that the psyche can turn freedom into prohibition, layers containment with the possibility of a limitless horizon—an image of resistance. The transport of making art and the danger of revelation are held in balance, the quest for freedom embodied in Bjork's expressionist paint handling. If we look, we might see, at the edges of the canvas, miniature landscapes embedded in the web of brushstrokes. Bjork takes the risk that the horizon once barred can be opened to a turquoise blue containing the promise of illumination.

In 1999, Bjork, conjuring memories of her youth, began again to paint landscape in the countryside. Abstraction and landscape have always been, for Bjork, a path to and recording of freedom, expansiveness, a mapping of an (other) access to the self. As Bjork painted (self) portraits, she fantasized a return to the painterly abstraction that first attracted her to the emotional qualities embodied in color, gesture, and form, to a free and generous play—a passionate vision.

Bjork continues to work on the edge, playing with revelation and concealment, light and shadow—the chance of catching a glimpse, the chance of another understanding (of the self). Resisting boundaries, she dares abandon, her painting has become expansive, even as it pushes against the picture plane and moves beyond the canvas edge into the viewer's space, explosive. She courts chaos, but her vision is now unmasked and chaos is reformulated—freedom, space, fluidity—the layering of sumptuous color and red-golden light.

Overlook, (cover) is symphonic in scale, a communion with self through the intermediary of the natural world. Bjork works at the translucent grey moment just before dawn—light bleeds through. We look from a distance, darkness opens, the under level floats up, we become aware of the tension between near and far, between surface, the picture plane, and that which lies beyond and behind the picture plane. A curtain of red, washes down. Powerful, threatening, pressing against the picture plane, it looms into the viewer's space, obscuring possible vision, impeding access to the promised depth. Red becomes the color that contains the dark (of the sun). Pale, golden oranges create a delicate tracery through the red, the dripped paint as willed as the marks made with a fine brush. The apocalyptic and lyrical are held in delicate and precarious balance. The struggle (within the self) is quieted, held in abeyance.



With *The Cave* (p.6), Bjork again poses the question of balance between light and shadow, surface and depth. The underpainting, the subterranean level is a world of its own, frightening and perhaps dangerous—one could lose one's footing. A subdued light recalls that of December when the "sun is really low in the sky." The light pulses; is the dark lifting or closing in. As she works to see, to "get down to the bone," the artist allows the ideal, the child's fantasy of (total) freedom to interrupt the adult's nightmare recall of confinement. Playing with gorgeous color on the razor's edge of self-knowledge—between luminescence and the void—each instance of clarity holds the possibility of yet another shrouding/cloaking. The artist's response is an understanding that the dark, *The Cave*, grounds the light giving it depth and luminosity.

In *Meadows* (p.11) and *Untitled #6* (p.10), Bjork claims the freedom to be playful, to lavish in the sensual enjoyment of the medium, as in the light of a sunlit day. Looking back even as she goes forward, "you bring the past, the tenderness, the nice things with you," she paints beginnings, the translucent yellows, fragile new greens, and soft pinks of spring. She recalls the art of her foremothers, from her grandmother's garden, and the "pale pink roses" she grew, and her mother's painting, to the painting of Joan Mitchell and Jay de Feo's monumental *The Rose*.



In *Untitled #6*, the yellow brush strokes, become figure-like, they cavort, play, dance across a green field backed by the silvered turquoise blue of summer. This work could only be made through an immersion in nature, in full view of the countryside, staring into the light—vision unmasked.

In this celebration of a lyrical relation with the natural world, the act of painting, becomes for Bjork, the reach for a utopian ideal. Bjork works to reconcile structure with expansiveness, "it has to be both," luminescence and the dark of the sun. Light filters through layers of color, and color becomes light. The gesture of the artist's hand, is at once brushstroke and ray of light, a particular moment of sunset and a record of freedom and expansiveness—the opening of the artist's psyche.

Flavia Rando Ph.D.
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