

"LIQUID LANDSCAPE ENVIRONMENT," (2010) MIXED MEDIA INSTALLATION NOW AT BILL LOWE GALLERY, 16 X 40 FEET, COURTESY THE ARTIST AND BILL LOWE GALLERY, ATLANTA

OPPOSITE: "EDGE OF REALITY," (2011) MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS, 73 X 40 INCHES, COURTESY THE ARTIST AND BILL LOWE GALLERY, ATLANTA



KIMBER BERRY

WRITTEN BY QUINN AUX PENN

The ad campaigns of the 1960s, born between bending the typist over your desk and calling your wife, were different days of advertising—have a scotch, write a clever line, have another scotch and pat yourself on the back when your ad appears in a glossy mag. Today, designated “ad space” is gone; advertisers permeate every part of American culture, and the result is the impression they’re not seducing you with a coy hand on your thigh but jabbing a hot pink thumb into every orifice you’ve got.

It’s that sensory onslaught that captivates and compels visual artist Kimber Berry. Crafting vivid, technicolor paintings and installation pieces through a “flow painting” technique—essentially allowing paint to drip and flow, steered by the grounding force of gravity—that also invokes digital images, she aims to incite a dialogue about “the psychological effects of living within this bombardment, the visual noise and the stimuli of the current world that we live in.”

Fittingly, looking at her paintings is itself a sensory overload: Stark white backdrops cling to the perimeters of unnaturally bright colors that bleed, expand, and swirl, allowing little room for visual relaxation. Her color palette is derivative of the hues digital designers use—rich fuschias, hypnotic blues, magnetic, electrifying greens—that compete for a viewer’s attention in much the same way commercial billboards do. Her choice of acrylic paint (rather than oil paints) mimics and brightens the plasticity of contemporary culture’s artificial shininess, while the industrial foam she uses expands to form textured, visually provocative landscaping to her pieces.

Berry grew up in Los Angeles and has witnessed the evolution of ever-constant stimuli. “We just keep taking things to the next level,” she says. “First we had billboards that were, say, 8 feet long. Now we’ve got 10 feet long ones that are digital.” Stimuli itself is neither good nor bad according to Berry, but her role is to make it evident; to bring it into social consciousness so that we’re not passive recipients of our environments, but instead active critics and thinkers. “I want people to be aware of something—who they are and what they’re living within, and the society in which we do live, but what they do with that is totally up to them.”

Environmental themes play a consistent role in Berry’s work, both at the conceptual level (provoking examination of our surroundings in contemporary society) and at the physical level: Her installations invite viewers to literally step into her work, effectively melding the environment they live in with the one she’s created, creating a tangled illusion of real and simulated environments. “With each step, the view of what’s going on with the painting changes. You have this shift as you walk within the paintings. You notice different things. And with multiple layers and all these details, you’re catching different things at different moments.”

Her current project, titled *Plastic Gardens*, replaces the stark white backgrounds that dominate her previous works with varying shades of sky blue, reminiscent of the perpetually vernal skies of Los Angeles, which she still calls home. *Plastic Gardens* explores humanity’s relationship with nature. “As a society, we’ve gone in and taken nature out, and then chosen to selectively place it back in and then have green spaces,” says Berry.

Looking to 2013, she’s anticipating a solo exhibition with Avis Frank Gallery in Houston and a preview exhibition with Tinney Contemporary in Nashville, as well as an installation project at Los Angeles’ LAX airport, where her characteristically exploratory paint will pour and expand across a 40-foot canvas amid the advertisements and logos that are mainstays in the airport. “I wanted to give the experience to people of walking into a painting,” Berry explains. “There is no better way than just walking within it.”