THE ARMORY SHOW 2026 **MELINDA BRAATHEN** **BOOTH P48**

SEPTEMBER 24 - 27

Baert Gallery is pleased to participate in The Armory Show, New York with a solo presentation by Norwegian-American artist Melinda Braathen. Braathen's paintings explore the intersection of consciousness and its reciprocity with the natural world. There is a sense of uninterrupted time in her paintings, where a seemingly fleeting moment can unfold and encounter something more ancient, unfamiliar, sacred or uneasy. Inspired by Edvard Munch's exploration of painting being at once physical and metaphysical, atmospheric and psychic, Braathen's paintings create spaces where the boundaries between internal psychological states and external natural forces blur.

Drawing inspiration from the Celtic poet John O'Donohue and David Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous*, Braathen advances her inquiry into the concept of consciousness as a fluid state that extends beyond corporeal limits. Her paintings become somatic visuals and ontological maps where the body is no longer a discrete vessel, but a porous site of exchange.

Braathen begins with personal photographs, capturing fleeting moments of light and form, which are then distilled through gouache studies. She often takes several photographs of one location until something opens — a deeper movement that somehow reaches towards the mysterious, an inherent intelligence, a knowingness — that can be further considered and cultivated in her painting practice. This process has become even more vital for Braathen as she has recently entered motherhood and grapples, like so many of us, with outsourcing vital human skills to the efficacy of technology. In these recent paintings, the subject, usually another creative person in her life, is painted in delicate reciprocity with the manifold textures and shapes of an animate landscape. Braathen builds up luminous, breathing surfaces that are interlaced with intangible visuals and energetic qualities that seemingly diverge from the natural light and logic of the landscape.

In *Songe*, Braathen depicts an embodied figure emanating a subtle matrix of sensations and sensibilities. This seemingly quiet dynamism that is usually imperceptible is mirrored in the blue circular movement above. Is the body attuning to nature's innate rhythm or is a certain alignment or reciprocity taking shape?

Braathen's paintings oscillate between the instant and the meditative. In *Jung's Guest*, a woman sits at a table. However, all the signifiers of the dinner party aren't present. Rather, the figure is anchored in an environment that vibrates with an ancient, cyclical presence that may continue or evaporate at any moment.

Braathen paints as a way to instill an understanding within the viewer of the emotional energy she experiences, employing a liberty through her color choices and energetic brush strokes to move beyond imagery that is purely representational. Color is utilized not for its psychological shorthand, but as a force that directs the viewer's awareness toward the movement and temperature of the space. Her visual markers suggest a boundary between self and atmosphere that is constantly being renegotiated through sensory experience and temporal intuition. The result depicts nature as containing both renewable and ancient matter, time and eternity, the known and the unknown. All exist within a single moment.

Melinda Braathen (b. 1985, Oslo, Norway) lives and works in Los Angeles. She earned her BFA from Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, US in 2007. Her recent exhibitions include *Soft Bodies*, UC Santa Barbara, CA, US (2025); *Atmosphere*, Baert Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US (2024); *Charged Bodies*, Golsa, Oslo, Norway (2023); Alice Folker, Copenhagen, Denmark (2023); *Currents*, Baert Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US (2022). Her work is included in numerous collections, including in the USA, United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Norway, Greece, Nigeria, Czech Republic, and United Arab Emirates.