

Arnold/Bartleet/Beazley/Beehre/Bennett/
Benson-Cooper/Birch/Black/Buchanan/Bush/
Campbell/Carr/Chong/Cleland/Clemens/
Clements/Couper/Crook/de Vries/Dowman/
Dyne/Eady/Edwards/Elliott/Ellwood/Esling/
Fair/Fitts/Fletcher/Fletcher/Foley/Freestone/
Gibbons/Glass/Greenbank/Groot/Hartnett/
Haydon/Hayward/Hemer/Hollis/Hughes/
Hunt/Hurley/Hutchinson/Irving/Jones/Kaan/
Kearney/Keogh/Kidd/Kim/Kregar/Larkin/
Li/Madden/Main/Maloy/Matchitt/Maw/
McCracken/McKinnon/McLeod/McMillan/
Meek/Miller/Mitchell/Mitchell/Mortimer/
Murray/Oh/Oram/Orjis/Parkes/Paterson/
Pearce/Pearless/Phillips/Robinson/Sheehan/
Stevens/Summers/Taratoa/Taurerewa/
Thatcher/Thomas/Thomas-Edmond/
Thompson/Tolhurst/Ussher/van Hasselt/
Wade/Wall/Wealleans/Wedekind/Wheeler/
Wilkinson/Williams/Woods/Youle

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this
century
Warwick
Brown



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100 Contemporary New Zealand Artists
A COLLECTOR'S GUIDE

Warwick Brown

jee young kim



Born Korea 1982
BFA Elam 2002
Based in Auckland

Why is it that some Abstract Expressionist paintings work and others don't? It is a difficult question to answer, and the answer may be subjective. It is to do with balance, both of colours and forms; with dynamics, the sense of movement discernible in the sweeps of the brush; and, most of all, with confidence. Successful paintings in this genre must make a bold take-it-or-leave-it statement, and must do it in the face of thousands of earlier works made in the 1950s and subsequently. This sort of painting is not easy to do, and never was easy, even for the original masters of the movement. It is similar to a talent for musical improvisation — you either have it or you don't.

The necessary qualities are found in the oil paintings of Jee Young Kim. Her works are fully resolved and strongly composed, but also seem to have just happened on the canvas. There is definite structure imposed by fat sweeps of colour, but this is deconstructed by all manner of subversive, seemingly random brush marks. Nothing is worked over, and it all seems fresh; flying or floating above a background of light colours. It is totally engaging, and a delight to behold.

Kim is certainly not applying a formula when she works. She says: 'I am working with the moment, working to see what happens as I move my brush. What happens is a fact, a coincidence, an outcome, a surprise and an action. I don't close my eyes and hope for the best . . . I stop and look to achieve the effect of oneness.' On the subject of colour she says: 'When people talk about colour, they have to use words. This can be difficult because, like music, colour isn't something that language can easily capture. I think it is easier to demonstrate what colour does than to describe it. The marks, their glossiness or flatness, how the surface catches the light or



Song of Freedom, 2006. Oil on canvas, 1600 x 1600 mm



stays matt, the weight of colours . . . cannot be seen in a reproduction.⁴

Kim's use of colour shows a sure but adventuresome touch. In 2002 she was juxtaposing, in a diptych, lime green with orange, burnt umber and aqua and wine red with light blue and pink. From her show *Over the Rainbow*, in 2006, *Day Break* was a typical work. It consisted of overlapping sweeps of pale orange, sky blue, grey,

maroon and hot pink. However, Kim can depart from this celebratory approach in a work such as *Song of Freedom*, dominated by a large, puddled dark form reminiscent of those in Richard Diebenkorn's *Elegy* paintings of 1957–60. In 2008 Kim began working on light brown Belgian linen, leaving areas raw and changing her palette to more muted tones.

Above: *Over the Rainbow III*, 2005. Oil on linen (diptych), 1300 x 1850 mm

Right: *On 42nd Street*, 2005. Oil on canvas (diptych), 1320 x 1840 mm