

Magenta Plains | Independent New York  
Alan Uglow & Jane Swavely  
May 9–12, 2024 | Booth 601

For the 2024 edition of the Independent NY, Magenta Plains presents recent paintings by Jane Swavely (b. 1959) and drawings and paintings from the early 1990s and 2000s by Alan Uglow (1941–2011). This dual presentation features two devoted urbanists who define one of New York City's most recognizable neighborhoods: The Bowery, and marks the first time their work will be shown alongside one another. The presentation pays homage to painterly conversations specific to the New York scene of the late 20th century.

As contemporary downtown denizens, Uglow and Swavely were impacted by the avant-garde culture percolating on what had been known as "skid row" while maintaining distinctive minimalist visions related to color and phenomenology. Uglow, a British visual artist moved from London to New York City in 1969 and settled on the Bowery in 1974 after befriending fellow post-minimalist painters such as Jake Berthot, Brice Marden, and Winston Roeth. Amidst the competing strands of Conceptualism, Minimalism, Abstract Expressionism, and Pop which permeated the downtown scene across the years Uglow inhabited it, Uglow maintained a critical remove while subtly adapting his painting according to ongoing dialogues. Swavely meanwhile has been a committed practitioner of gestural abstraction in the downtown scene for multiple decades, adapting her particular blend of tones, shades, and brushstrokes over the years to demonstrate a command of the painted surface as a location for visual exploration.

Working serially over many decades, Alan Uglow maintained a unique vision of minimalist abstraction, characterized by meticulous attention to scale and composition. Of note also was his particular consideration of the placement of his paintings in relation to the wall and surrounding space. Uglow played the physical solidity of his efforts against his paintings optical radiance, thickening his stretcher bars so that his paintings protruded farther from the wall, hanging his works close to the ground or even simply leaning them, set on tiny blocks, against a wall. Executed with dozens of paint layers, his works include delicate nuances that fluctuate depending on available light and the viewer's perspective, while encouraging an engagement with the structure of the painted object. They appear at once calm and dynamic, and simultaneously suggest emptiness and ground.

Included in this presentation will be two major works of Uglow's from the mid-2000s, *T-Bar* (2006) and *Solid* (2008). Both of these works bear resemblances to his earlier *Standards* and *Stadiums* series from the 1990s, but emerge as distinctly singular entries in Uglow's practice. *T-Bar* takes on Uglow's idiosyncratic stark white ground and parallel striping, however the composition is interrupted by a vertical line in the lower half of the painting, evoking a dimensional architectural form, as opposed to the flat surface of a football pitch. *Solid* meanwhile is a luminous composition of two sheets of silver and gold, marking a distinction from some of his more spare paintings, but maintaining the format of his *Standards* paintings (denoted by a thin rectangular band close to the edge of the painting). This painting is one of several made for his solo exhibition at Museum Haus Esters in 2010, a career-spanning retrospective. Both works demonstrate the way in which Uglow worked iteratively without sticking to consistent conventions; each work for each show presented itself anew, while connecting to his long-standing oeuvre.

As a young artist, Jane Swavely visited museums in Philadelphia and New York, eventually attending the figurative academic program at Boston University College of Fine Arts which was led by Philip Guston in the 1970s and subsequently James Weeks. Brice Marden, with whom she worked from 1980-85, graduated from the same program some years prior. Swavely moved to New York City in 1980 and worked as an assistant to New Image artist Lois Lane while attending the School of Visual Arts. Eventually settling into her Bowery loft in the early 1980s, Swavely continued to assist Marden. In 1986 at the age of twenty-five, she held her first solo-show at CDS Gallery, and was part of the CDS Gallery roster until 2005. As her career progressed, Swavely became part of A.I.R, a legendary female-run art space founded in the 1970s. A.I.R provided her with five solo

exhibitions from 2011-2022, showcasing the depth and breadth of her talent over the years. Swavely held her first solo exhibition at Magenta Plains in 2024, where she is currently represented.

Swavely's abstract paintings attempt to reconcile romanticism and minimalism while referencing natural landscapes and cinematic elements. By working with her canvases laid out on the floor, she allows gravity to shape the art, resulting in paintings that become windows into captivating worlds while possessing an insistent objecthood. Intense areas of color are set against zones where paint has been wiped from the surface, revealing undertones and vestigial forms, producing a sense of internal luminosity to the works. Works like the diptych *Silver OID #4* demonstrate this, as two conjoined strands of fiery orange are juxtaposed against a textural, patinated silver background. The distinction between these shades allows for an appreciation of the nuance of her brushstroke, and the painterly insight at the heart of her practice.