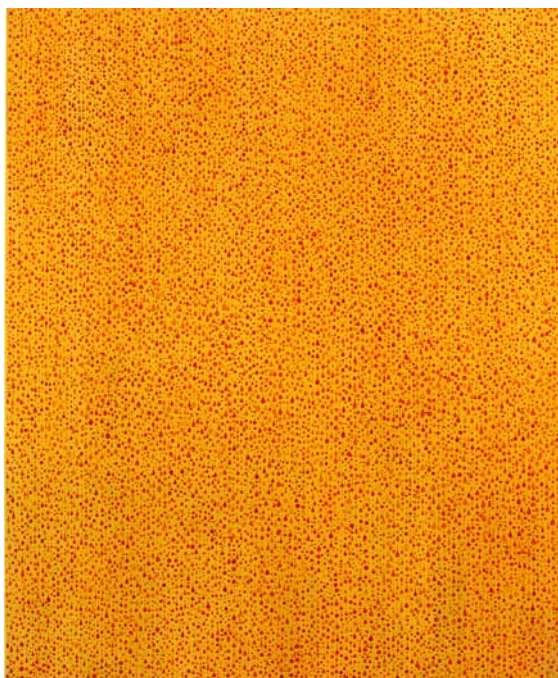


Karen Arm

The delicate abstract patterns laced across these glossy, jewel-toned canvases do not immediately suggest that the artist painted them from life. But Karen Arm does just that, distilling branches, water, or smoke down to their basic structures and behavior. What appear at a distance to be solid monochrome backgrounds are actually built from several applications of poured acrylic that Arm sands down a layer at a time. Up close, the radiant aquamarine in *Untitled (whirlpool)*, for instance, yields glints of wintergreen, sky blue, and pale buttercream yellow that become obvious when you look at the sides of the canvas, where Arm leaves the drips that run over the edges. Concentric circles of red and violet fan out from a central point—a stone or penny plunked in the water, perhaps—and flecks of white suggest light glancing off the surface in this cool and meditative painting.

In *Untitled (blood #2)*, Arm paints a dazzling curtain of red droplets, striking a chartreuse field in rapid, downwardly vertical trajectories. These are literal drops, individually performing in the manner of blood or rain, or tears, yet they are co-opted into a mesmerizing pointillist expanse. *Untitled (blue branches, orange)*, with its calligraphic matrix of limbs reaching upward against a brightening orange background, suggests a transitional time of day.

Three works from Arm's latest series show an exciting new turn for the artist. Against deep indigo surfaces, she follows the labyrinthine course of white incense smoke coiling and accumulating as it rises seductively up the canvases. Here, she has let the genie out of the bottle.



Karen Arm, *Untitled (blood #2)*, 2001, acrylic on canvas, 44" x 36", P.P.O.W