

# rachel uffner

## Art in America

INTERVIEWS APR. 14, 2014

### Verbatim: Joanne Greenbaum



Joanne Greenbaum, *Untitled*, 2014, oil, oil crayon, acrylic and ink on canvas, 90 x 80 inches

*Joanne Greenbaum is an artist based in New York. Eight new paintings—made in her trademark mix of high and low materials, from oil paint to magic marker—are on view at Rachel Uffner's newly relocated Lower East Side gallery (through Apr. 20). This fall she will have a show at Galerie Crone, Berlin (Nov. 7-Dec. 19). With her 2½-month-old Chihuahua puppy sleeping in the crook of her arm, Greenbaum, 60, spoke with A.i.A. during a studio visit*

Rachel Uffner Gallery  
170 Suffolk Street  
New York, NY 10002

+1 212 274 0064  
info@racheluffnergallery.com  
racheluffnergallery.com

*about good vs. bad paintings, material experimentation and how to incorporate sculpture into her practice.*

I'm not one of those overly precious people about my work; I want it to be seen. There are a few things I hold on to for myself, but I'm all for just getting the work out and into the world. I'm not sentimental either—if it's dry, get it out of here!

I really like working big. I already had some big paintings going when Rachel invited me to do this show. I try to start a painting differently each time out. My process is not strategic at all; there is no planning. I may have an idea of a color, or a combination, that I want to use some day, but that's it. I never know if I'm going to use acrylic, or oil, or crayon or magic marker. Any thought that I have like that, I let it go.

Sometimes when I'm in the middle of working, I'll just go to the art supply store and look at stuff. I'll see something—a color, a pen—that I just *want*, and it'll spark a whole new direction. As un-strategic as I am, there is something to be said for using the materials that are in the marketplace. Acrylic paint used to be really plastic-y and the colors were horrible, but now it's really good. And there are markers that are archival and won't fade.

There's a real dance that goes on between painting, sculpture and drawing at my desk. At some point I might feel like drawing, so I'll take out some paper and do some watercolor. I try to keep everything really open. Fortunately right now I have the luxury of time to do that.

When I started making sculpture, I didn't feel entitled to use that word—I was thinking more in terms of three-dimensional drawing. I enjoyed sitting at a table, like I do when I draw. Now I'm working with clay, as well as this Japanese cellulose material that you can mold. The sculptures are very lightweight, it dries in 24 hours and you can paint it like paper. So these have kind of come back to drawing, in a way. I'd love to show the sculptures, hopefully at Uffner at some point. Right now I am trying to keep it separate, only because in the last six months or so I've seen so many paintings shows that have sculpture. It's a *thing*, and I'm very aware of clichés.

I don't think of my paintings as "maplike" at all, but a lot of people do. I think of the canvases as more of a still-life space: a table, a structure, shelving, a stairway. The paintings become a record of their own making. I like the idea of stepping back and letting the information seep into my brain. There's no such thing as ruining. Very often the thing that I think I did to ruin the painting is a move ahead. Sometimes your body is ahead of your mind, or vice versa. Is it a good painting, is it a bad painting? In my older age, I can relax a little bit; I don't care anymore! I've lost my ability to be judgmental, which has freed me to take more chances.

—As told to Leigh Anne Miller