



From Finance to Fine Art: The Painting Odyssey of Jill Krutick

BY ANNETTE BLAUGRUND



Plenty, 2013, Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches (91.4 x 121.9 cm). Private collection.

Left (paintings from left to right):

Ice Cube Large, 2016, Oil on canvas, 60 x 60 inches (152.4 x 152.4 cm). Framed: 62 x 62 inches (157.5 x 157.5 cm).

Dreamscape Surprise!, 2016, Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 120 inches (182.9 x 304.8 cm). 2 panels, 72 x 60 inches (182.9 x 152.4 cm) each. Framed: 74 x 122 inches (188.0 x 309.9 cm).

Bubbles, 2016, Oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches (152.4 x 121.9 cm). Framed: 62 x 50 inches (157.5 x 127.0 cm).

Pictured at Manolis Projects.

Jill Krutick is an abstract expressionist whose unique technique harks back to American gestural expressionism begun in the 1940s. Yet early in life, Claude Monet and Vincent Van Gogh were her favorite artists; the former for his late lily pond paintings and the latter for his textural paint application. Krutick favors texture and contrast in her mostly abstract compositions. Although she painted as a child, her background is very surprising because she took an alternative route before becoming a full-time painter.

After receiving a BS at the eminent Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania in 1984, she went on to get her MBA from the Stern School of Business at New York University in 1992. While obtaining her graduate degree she worked for seven years at Salomon Brothers, the highly regarded Wall Street investment bank, and was promoted to vice president of equity research. Between 1994 and 2005 she was managing director of equity research covering the entertainment and leisure industries at Citigroup/Smith Barney. From there she moved to a corporate setting and became senior vice president of investor relations and corporate development at Warner Music Group (2005-mid-2011). After her departure, the firm she worked with, Partner's International, not only exhibited her early work but also bought her paintings for its corporate collection. An auspicious beginning to a new career! It is hard to believe that she would give up such a distinguished profession that certainly garnered greater financial security than a vocation in the arts. Yet, during these years, working on weekends and evenings, she found that painting was her respite, her joy, and her calling.

Like Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), who as an amateur artist held on to his job as a stockbroker's assistant until in 1885 when he went to Paris to study art full time (and abandoned his family). Krutick gave up her day job (but not her family) and decided to do what fulfilled her most. From the fall of 2011 on, she has exclusively devoted herself to her new endeavor. She enrolled in the Art Students League where she was fortunate enough to study with Charles Hinman, Ronnie Landfield, Mariano Del Rosario, and Frank O'Cain from 2011 to 2015.

The Art Students League, founded in 1875, for over 140 years has maintained reasonably priced classes and flexible schedules for both amateurs and professionals. Student controlled and managed, the League offers a variety of methodologies and techniques taught by a diverse group of professional artists who offer classes morning, noon, and night. The only prerequisite is a desire to learn. While a student, Krutick served on the League's Board of Control and participated in annual class exhibitions where she was awarded an honorable mention in 2012 for a painting called *Water Lily*.

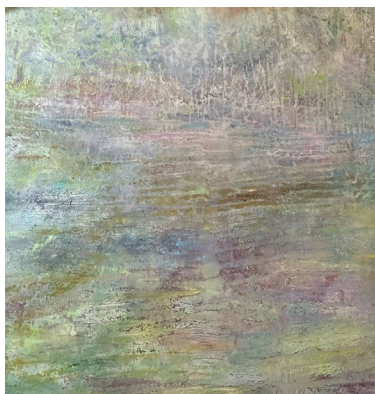
The League has had an influence on a number of important abstract artists such as Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollack, and Robert Rauschenberg who were the forerunners of students like Krutick. She knew from the beginning that she wanted to express herself in paint on canvas and selected teachers who would help her develop her eye and her skills. Charles Hinman is an abstract painter known for his three-dimensional shaped canvases and his textural approach. He helped open Krutick's mind to creating work that is dynamic and reveals depth through light and shadows. Ronnie Landfield (b. 1947) is a Lyrical Abstractionist who is best known for his abstract landscape paintings that are often soft in color and shapes, different from the hard edge geometric forms of some abstractionists. Krutick describes some of his colorful work as similar to watercolor. One can certainly see his influence in many of her paintings, some of which like *Pink Field*, 2013, and *Painted Sky*, 2013, have recognizable landscape elements. (*Dreamscape 2* and *5* are exceptional because of their subtle landscape effects.) Frank O'Cain taught Krutick to look at the canvas in sections and Mariano Del Rosario taught her about critiquing her own work and knowing how to finish a composition. They all brought different techniques and ideas to Krutick's attention so that when she left the school she had the confidence to experiment with various styles.

Krutick has expanded upon her studies and has made remarkable progress for someone who began working full time less than a decade ago. She has been included in many group exhibitions and has already had several solo exhibitions. Patrons have commissioned her work and a wide range of important collectors now own her paintings. Inspired by earlier female artists such as Helen Frankenthaler and Lee Krasner, she persists in finding her place in the art world. Having fought her way to leadership and success on Wall Street and in the corporate world, Krutick has found the art world more welcoming because her predecessors fought and won a place for women artists. With her sophisticated business background, Krutick marries art and management and thus is savvy about developing and advancing her career.

Examining Krutick's work chronologically, beginning with her somewhat geometric style, we see an abstract expressionist who uses the canvas as a painted surface, mainly without recognizable objects. As with many second and third generation abstract expressionists, she utilizes elements of chance that are



Lady Liberty, 2012, Oil on canvas, 30 x 24 inches, (76.2 x 61.0 cm). Framed: 32 x 26 inches (81.3 x 66.0 cm). Private collection.



Spring Fantasy, 2016, Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 inches (101.6 x 101.6 cm). Framed: 42 x 42 inches (106.7 x 106.7 cm).



Meditation, 2015, Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches (61.0 x 76.2 cm). Marchand Family collection.

personal, emotional, and unpredictable. Using palette knife, brush, as well as sometimes flinging paint at a canvas on the floor, she is able to delineate form through the texture of the paint as in *Sand Dunes*, 2010, and by creative color choices. Even when she obliterates the lines made by the palette knife by smoothing them over with the flat side of the knife as in the predominantly blue and green *Water Lily*, 2011, the overall effect is that of dense vegetation with blue water and/or sky peeking through. Later works have the sensibility of patchwork quilts of brilliant color as in *Fireworks*, 2011 and *Collage*, 2013, suggestive of the colors and structure of Hans Hoffman's paintings. In the later work, the small squares begin to take on a life of their own and break out of the geometric patterning. Among this group of paintings aspects of Impressionism appear in her pastel palette and in the looser structure seen in *Reflections*, 2015, harking back to Monet's large water lily paintings, 1914-26. Monet wrote that he was striving for "an illusion of an endless whole, of water without horizon or bank." And Krutick achieves this kind of endless space in some of her later paintings. Reminiscent of Monet's hazy paintings of the Seine near Giverny is *Spring Fantasy*, 2016. In *Plenty* and *Rose Bush*, both of 2013, the flowers and landscape reference Van Gogh, and are definitely recognizable yet they retain qualities of abstraction.

As Krutick experiments she both reinvents earlier styles as she develops new themes, so that the patchwork impressions keep reappearing as time goes on, yet with differences as in *Meditation*, 2015. Here the block-like pattern is differentiated by a more deliberate building of color and texture, therefore each square while clearly defined, contributes to the all over expressive melding of forms. The *Ice Cube* pictures that span 2012 to 2017 are an interesting evolution of geometric forms suggestive of Mark Rothko's rectangular fields of color. The cube, reflecting outside light and color, sits in the center of the canvas and floats on a background of harmonizing color. This still evolving series is subtle and the surface becomes increasingly textural. Krutick says, "Ice cubes are symbolic of personal challenges. The gold center is the fire within and stands for overcoming challenges so that they melt away, as ice cubes do when exposed to heat."

Several of Krutick's paintings of 2012 clearly reveal the influence of the German artist, Gerhard Richter, where the paint in his work is layered and then scraped across and down the picture plane, revealing the colors underneath the top paint coats. Here the artist risks what will emerge but is free to add and subtract as he proceeds. Three of Krutick's 2012 paintings seem to mimic this technique, if not by process then by resemblance: *Field of Dreams*, *Lady Liberty*, and *Ray of Sunshine*. Richter uses large and small board like surfaces to reveal the layers beneath and blur the paint; he then adds line and color where he feels necessary. Krutick uses large palette knives and a squeegee to attain a similar striking effect.

In 2015 and 2016, there is a continued exploration and expansion of images and techniques seen previously. From the textural feel of *Winter Solstice*, an abstract landscape, to the overall surface colors in *Cutting Edge*, with its calligraphic slashes of black lines (evolving from geometric works), that add a sense of depth to *Tie Dye*, a variation on *Ice Cube*, one can see the advancement in Krutick's work. *Ice Cube Large*, 2015, *Ice Cube Black and Red*, 2016 and *Ice Cube Batman*, 2017 confirm her returning to previous realms, constantly seeking new ways to reveal her feelings and experiences.

Krutick's newer work is larger and has a more overall quality; some are splashes or bursts of color poured onto the canvas. The patterning is similar to what can be attained with watercolor on wet paper, obtained here by dropping diluted paint from above onto the canvas laid on the floor. Using less stringent, softer colors, she creates a harmonious synthesis, a symphony of color as she responds to the rock and roll music she listens to while painting. She obtains the large size by melding two or three canvas panels together that read as one. These panels are more decorative than the evocative shapes in her earlier paintings, as if she is investigating size and coloration, reaching for something new. Even the *Shangri La* series does not refer to real encounters. Yet Krutick usually bases her work on colors, shapes, and experiences she has had as in the *Dreamscape* series, based on photographs taken from a sailboat in New Zealand.

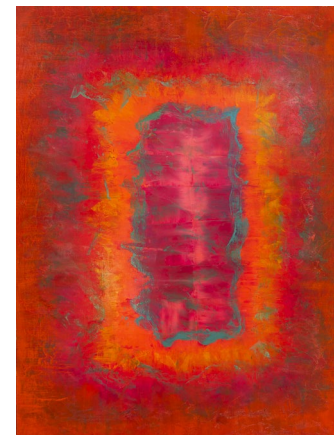
The newest direction is seen in the series the artist calls *Swirl*. Works like *Moonstone*, 2017 reveal free-floating swirling monochromatic shapes, almost like waves. Perhaps this is the moon's effect on the sea. Part of that series, *Dangling Conversations* and *Elektra*, both of 2015, utilize the swirls in a variety of colors and are reminiscent of some paintings by Lee Krasner. This is a very interesting expansion that allows the artist to introduce a variety of colors in loose, flowing, shapes that resemble paisley designs. There is a spontaneity and originality in these forms that predict thrilling new compositions in the future work of Jill Krutick.

Where will this dedicated artist find her next inspiration? Life, emotions, and outside influences will continue to inspire her. It is exciting to anticipate Krutick's reworking of older themes and inventing new ones. She already has an audience of knowledgeable collectors who appreciate her artistry and she will certainly have more as she continues. The Coral Springs Museum has recognized her talent by acquiring one of her paintings and is giving her a solo exhibition in 2019. Who knows what will happen from there.

—Annette Blaugrund, has published numerous books and articles on subjects in American and European nineteenth- and twentieth-century art. She was director of the National Academy Museum and School of Fine Arts in New York for eleven years. Before that she was the Andrew W. Mellon Senior Curator at the New York Historical Society and a curator of paintings and sculpture at the Brooklyn Museum. She received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Academy Museum in 2008 and was made a Chevalier in the Order of Arts and Letters by the Republic of France in 1992. Dr. Blaugrund received her Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1987.



Ice Cube Spring, 2016, Oil on canvas,
60 x 60 inches (152.4 x 152.4 cm).
Framed: 62 x 62 inches (157.5 x 157.5 cm).



Tie Dye, 2014, Oil on canvas, 48 x 36 inches
(121.9 x 91.4 cm). Marchand Family collection.

Right:

Shangri La 6, 2017, Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 72
inches (121.9 x 182.9 cm). 2 panels, 48 x 36
inches (121.9 x 91.4 cm) each. Framed: 50 x 74
inches (127.0 x 188.0 cm).

