



MONA BRODY

Mona Brody

Portals, Apparitions, and Other Voices

2022 - 2023

Essay by Mary Birmingham

**MANUFACTURERS
VILLAGE
ARTISTS**

Manufacturers Village Artists
356 Glenwood Avenue
East Orange, NJ 07019
manufacturersvillageartists.com

Portals, Apparitions, and Other Voices

Mona Brody's recent paintings convey a mysterious and ineffable beauty. Her current body of work, "Portals, Apparitions, and Other Voices," offers points of entry into an aesthetic territory filled with spirit, thought, and emotion. Here, translucent veils of color evoke shadowy spaces, murky waters, or hazy clouds, and ghostly, floating forms suggest the presence of souls no longer visible. Brody has always used abstraction to explore what she terms the "unnameable," inventing places and forms that are simultaneously earthly and ephemeral.

Brody's process-driven practice helps her find pathways into the work. Using materials such as handmade oil paint, pigmented shellac, and wax on canvas or linen, she lays down marks, continually working and re-working them; sometimes she removes them completely, knowing that erasures can be just as important as additions. Responding to her own mark-making, Brody discovers images hidden within the layers. She strikes a balance between the intentional and the accidental, embracing the serendipity that is inherent in her process. The artist calls this activity a kind of alchemy—a seemingly magical process of transformation, creation, and combination.

Brody's subtle mastery of color creates an emotional resonance in the work, enabling viewers to connect to it in a primal way. The elemental palette seems to be drawn from deep within the earth—the rich umbers, ochres, and chalky whites of rocks and soil, the flicker of minerals like copper and turquoise, and the rosy glow of molten lava. By incorporating shades of indigo in several of the paintings, the artist may also be alluding to feelings of mourning or loss.

Most of these paintings have strongly vertical formats, suggesting portals that open onto undefinable spaces. It is almost as if Brody is inviting the viewer to peer through curtains or veils of translucent fabric to see what lies beyond. In *Sharing Silence*, hazy forms float as if encapsulated between dark columnar shapes. This divided compositional format is echoed in three related works—*They Have Walked There Before*, *Moving Through*, and *Where to Go*. In each one, apparition-like forms resembling x-rays, strands of DNA, or sun-bleached bones emerge from the dark center—perhaps providing physical evidence of human presence. Although titles suggest bodies or other entities moving through space, Brody's imagery remains purposefully ambiguous.

Often, Brody's intention is to capture movement. Her work conveys the idea of fluidity—a quality of smooth and graceful movement, like that of a dancer. Fluidity also refers to that which is changeable or malleable, making it a perfect word to describe Brody's oeuvre. Her interest in the tension between motion and stasis is reflected in the titles she chooses. Some, like *Passing Through* and *Escape*, connote active movement, while others, such as *Mired*; *What Rests on the Surface*, and *Hiding Out* conjure arrested movement. Whichever form it takes, the concept of motion is always present.

Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that deals with abstract concepts such as being, knowing, identity, time, and space—concepts that Brody has explored and even embraced in her artistic practice. As an abstract artist, Brody has always been comfortable with the notion that abstraction can represent metaphysical ideas. In that sense, her work is akin to visual poetry, transforming ideas and emotions into images. (The artist has often drawn a connection between poetry and visual art; her 2017 installation, "Colors of Silence" juxtaposed original haiku poems with small abstract paintings.) Brody's individual titles, which construct their own kind of poetic language, are not literal descriptions of her subjects but instead are clues to some of the metaphysical ideas she confronts in the work: *Day after Yesterday*, *Sharing Silence*, *What We Treasure*. While it may be impossible to illustrate these intangible ideas, Brody offers us portals that may lead us to a deeper exploration and understanding of them.

In *Poetics*, his well-known treatise on literary theory, the philosopher Aristotle stated, "The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance." This has always been Mona Brody's aim and happily, her aim has always been true.

Mary Birmingham, 2023

Mary Birmingham is an independent curator based in Montclair, NJ. She was Director of Exhibitions at the Hunterdon Art Museum, Curator at the Visual Arts Center of New Jersey 2010-2022, organized more than one hundred exhibitions, and has written and lectured on a variety of topics in American and contemporary art.

Other Voices, 2023
Oil, pigmented shellac on linen
55 x 72 inches



Protected Hours, 2023
Oil, pigmented shellac on canvas
60 x 48 inches



They Have Walked There, 2022
(This Page Right)
Oil, pigmented shellac, wax on linen
48 x 30 inches

Moving Through, 2022
(Opposite Page Left)
Oil, pigmented shellac, wax on linen
48 x 30 inches

Where to Go, 2022
(Opposite Page Right)
Oil, pigmented shellac, wax on linen
48 x 30 inches



Getting Answers, 2023
Oil, pigmented shellac on canvas
60 x 48 inches



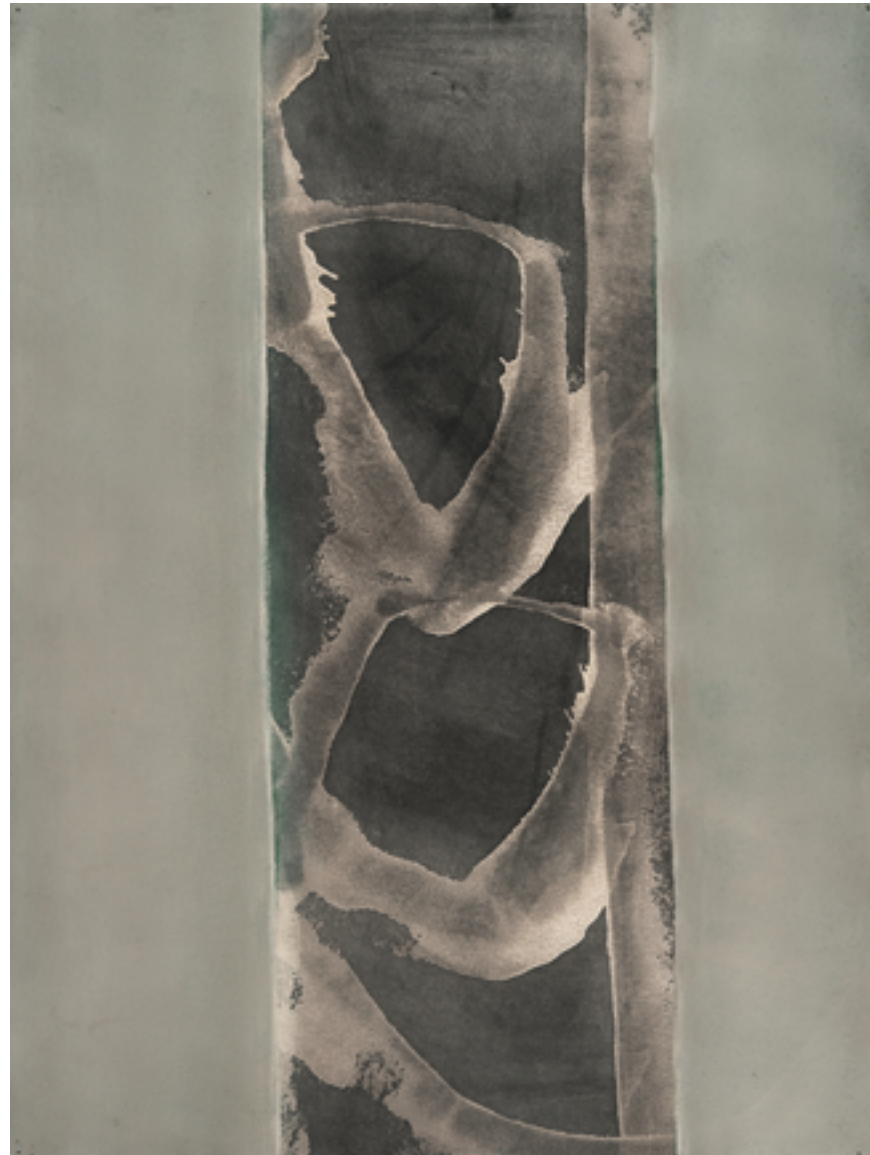
Passing Through, 2022
Oil, pigmented shellac, wax on linen
60 x 36 inches



Day After Yesterday, 2023
(This Page Right)
Arches oil sized paper
Oil, pigmented shellac, and charcoal
30 x 22 inches

Day Before Yesterday, 2023
(Opposite Page Left)
Arches oil sized paper
Oil, pigmented shellac, and charcoal
30 x 22 inches

Yesterday, 2023
(Opposite Page Right)
Arches oil sized paper
Oil, pigmented shellac, and charcoal
30 x 22 inches



Mired, 2023
Oil, pigmented shellac on canvas
60 x 48 inches



Its Fluent, 2022
(This Page Right)
Oil, pigmented shellac, wax on canvas
48 x 30 inches



What Rests on the Surface, 2022
(Opposite Page Center)
Oil, pigmented shellac, wax on canvas
60 x 36 inches



Escape, 2023
Oil, pigmented shellac on canvas
60 x 48 inches



Seeking Roots, 2022
(This Page Right)
Oil, pigmented shellac, wax on canvas
60 x 36 inches



What We Treasure, 2022
(Opposite Page Center)
Oil, pigmented shellac and wax on linen
60 x 36 inches



Hiding Out, 2023
Oil, pigmented shellac on canvas
60 x 48 inches



Sharing Silence, 2022
(This Page Right)
Oil, pigmented shellac, wax on canvas
36 x 24 inches



Pentimento, 2023
(Opposite Page Center)
Oil, pigmented shellac on linen
36 x 30 inches



Mona Brody

My work searches for a nexus between nature and the human condition; mysterious and unnerving. What is meant to be seen is not an obvious declaration of the tenets of abstraction, but a fusion of vastly different emotions filled with empathy and imagination. I continue to explore the use of alternative applicators and challenge the traditional approach to painting using handmade oil paints, pigmented shellac, enamel on paper, wood panels, and canvas. I am beguiled by the subtleties of layered paint always hinting at the presence of earlier images, forms, or strokes that have been painted over. Painting is about discovering an image within its hidden marks and truths. Through the process of working, reworking, layering, and subtracting, I attempt to locate a specific but unnamable place with its own rules that surprise me.

Mona Brody is an artist living and working in the NY Metropolitan area. Her solo and group exhibitions include The Painting Center, New York, NY, The President's Gallery, Pratt Institute of Art, Brooklyn, NY, Drawing Rooms, Jersey City, NJ, Utica College, Utica, NY, Kent State University, North Canton, Ohio, the Montclair Art Museum Montclair, NJ, The Galleries at Moore, Moore College of Art & Design, Philadelphia, PA, Aljira Center for Contemporary Art, Newark, NJ, Kunstlerhaus, Graz, Austria, Nanjing College of Art, Nanjing, China, and Boleslawiec Art Museum, Boleslawiec, Poland.

Public collections that own her work include The Museum of Modern Art Library, New York, The Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ, The New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, NJ, Summit Health Group, Montclair, NJ, Rutgers Center for Innovative Print and Paper, Rutgers State University, New Brunswick, NJ. Boleslawiec Art Museum, Boleslawiec, Poland, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Sweet Briar, VA and the Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick, NJ. Brody's fellowships and honors include Chateau d'Orquevaux, France, 2023 Artist Residency Diderot Award. Rutgers Center for Innovative Print and Paper, Rutgers State University, New Brunswick, NJ. Geraldine Dodge Foundation Artist Fellowships. The 33rd International Sculpture Symposium, Boleslawiec, Poland. Artist Fellowship Contemporary Artist Center, North Adams, MA. The 2015 Distinguished Alumna Award in Recognition of accomplishments in the Visual Arts, Moore College of Art & Design, Philadelphia, PA. Nominated for the 2017 Joan Mitchell Foundation, Painters and Sculptors Grant.

www.monabrody.com, monabrody@mac.com, [@mona_brody](https://www.instagram.com/mona_brody)

Acknowledgment

I am grateful for the advice, collaboration, and support in creating this catalog of my recent work, *Portals, Apparitions, and Other Voices. 2022 – 2023*. Thank you to Mary Birmingham for your insightful essay that accompanies the catalog. Peter Jacobs' photography, and to Shazzi Thomas, the designer of the catalog, her keen aesthetic has been inspirational. A special thank you to PE Pinkman, Executive Director for his curation of this work in conjunction with the exhibition at Watchung Art Center, Watchung, NJ.



