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JOAN SNYDER: 'A Year in the Painting Life'

By **ROBERTA SMITH**OCT. 1, 2010

Betty Cuninghame Gallery

541 West 25th Street

Chelsea

Through Oct. 30

In terms of painting, it has been quite a year for Joan Snyder, who turned 70 in April. Ms. Snyder [continues to work](#) in a spirited, in-your-face, opulently textured, outrageously colorful style that she devised some 40 years ago. As ever, it forces Abstract Expressionist fervor through a Minimalist sieve into its own private Idaho of Post-Minimalism.

Ms. Snyder is doing this better than ever, with a sense of restraint and economy that helpfully brakes her tendency toward excess and self-indulgence. More often than not, she achieves a new balance between built-up and relatively untouched, between overloaded and empty, that gives everyone a needed bit of breathing room.

The buildup is considerable: dripping dashes and loops of notational brushwork commingle with patches of cheesecloth or silk, burlap, plaster, the twigs and seeds of plants, occasional bits of glitter or strands of rope, rosebuds or leaves, and just plain dirt. As usual, a certain horizontality of brushwork and hints of a modernist grid lurking in the background hold things together.

The suggestions vary: blossoms, wounds, fireworks. In works like "Oh April" and "Brooklyn," you can imagine Ms. Snyder studying the exhibition of late-Monet water lilies at the Gagosian Gallery last spring with very different results. But then again, these works may be landscapes.

In all cases, the combination of sensuousness and honesty attracts. The works establish the act of painting as, at base, what it is: a series of episodic gestures, momentary thoughts and local feelings that occur linearly but, meeting on a single surface, accumulate into much more. **ROBERTA SMITH**