



ART SCENE

BONDING AGENT

Artist Sarah Crowner finds beauty in both bold shapes and the spaces in between

Look closely at artist Sarah Crowner's graphic paintings. What at first appear to be painted modernist abstractions are in fact assemblages of canvas cutouts—some raw, others coated with pigment—that she has meticulously stitched together. Ranging from simple geometries to more sensuous organic shapes, the motifs call to mind the hard-edged precision of Ellsworth Kelly, Lorser Feitelson, and Lygia Clark. But while bold silhouettes and patterns remain a primary fixation for Crowner, she is equally interested in how things fit together. "It's a way of creating form by joining material," Crowner says of her process, which she uses to bring more tactility to the medium. "They are really objects more than paintings."

Raised in Los Angeles and based in New York since 1999, Crowner exudes a laid-back vibe even as she's finishing work for two upcoming shows—one opening April 16 at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) and the other debuting at London's

Simon Lee Gallery on May 13. Pieces in progress abound at her sun-splashed Brooklyn studio, amid canvas shapes painted a deep teal hanging on a line to dry and heaps of paper cutouts numbered like tailor's patterns. Several large-scale compositions repeat a simplified wavelike form inspired by a 1934 work by Sophie Taeuber-Arp, the Swiss Dada powerhouse. "I pull a lot from art history," Crowner says.

The decorative arts also provide rich fodder. For the MASS MoCA exhibition, Crowner is installing a floor comprising hundreds of hand-painted cement tiles that visitors will walk on. She chose an unusual shape for the mosaic: "Pentagons are really hard to fit together, so you rarely see them in tiles," she says, adding that the in-between spaces really fascinate her most. And there is a palpable energy in the grouting—an underlying force pushing and pulling. Those seams, like the stitching in her paintings, might take a backseat visually to the intensely seductive sunny colors, but they also keep everything in place. —MEREDITH MENDELSON



Top: The Brooklyn studio of artist Sarah Crowner (above); she is represented in the U.S. by Casey Kaplan gallery (caseykaplangallery.com).

HAIR AND MAKEUP BY RACHEL TOLEDO FOR ABTF.COM