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art show

OK CHAOS

ARTIST NANCY LORENZ KNOWS JUST HOW UNPREDICTABLE
NATURE CAN BE. BY IAN PHILLIPS



Nancy Lorenz in her
Long Island City,
New York, studio.



Inside Lorenz's studio. **BELOW LEFT:** *Gold Flying Apsaras*, 2017, gold leaf, mother-of-pearl inlay, lacquer, clay, and resin on wood panel.



Nancy Lorenz expects accidents to occur. The New York City-based artist's first commission, for interior designer William Sofield in 1996, was realized in especially complex conditions. Sofield had enlisted her to decorate the elevator

doors at the Soho Grand Hotel, which she gilded with abstract motifs. The fact that the elevators were in use while she painted, however, was not optimal: "The doors were opening and closing the whole time," Lorenz recalls.

It's easy to imagine that someone less patient might have considered calling it quits, but Lorenz emerged unfazed. Since the Soho Grand project, she has cultivated a career as a fine artist with projects as diverse as decorative boxes for Bottega Veneta and screens for Chanel's Paris boutique.

This spring marks a milestone for Lorenz with her first solo museum exhibition, "Nancy Lorenz: Moon Gold," at the San Diego Museum of Art (opening April 27). The show features more than 40 works spanning 15 years, including eight new paintings and the 2004 *Rock Garden Room*, a monumental installation of bronze tabletop sculptures depicting landscapes.

Nature is one with Lorenz, as her work throughout the exhibition shows, with gilded and lacquered compositions of constellations and seascapes on unconventional surfaces like jute and corrugated cardboard. Also on display is her lifelong fascination with reflective

materials, such as mother-of-pearl and metal, which often ooze onto her canvases as if squeezed from a tube of toothpaste deliberately—or perhaps not.

Over the years, Lorenz has made uncertainty something to embrace. Whether it's an errant drip or a smeared elevator door, there's beauty in the chaos. "It's important to allow incidental marks to happen," she says. "If something accidental didn't happen, the work wouldn't be so alive." ■



Sea and Sky, 2017, pigment and lacquer on wood panel.