

# BROADWAY

Victoria Roth

*Velvet Nerve*

October 13 – November 19, 2022

Before anything else in Victoria Roth's new paintings, you notice color. Sharp and deep, sour, delicate; shades soon attach to shapes and spaces, all vivid with texture. Roth's work is not figurative, but it is bodily. Things bulge and are veiny. Structures take dendritic turns. There are several, exactingly applied gradients resembling psychedelic hair meticulously slicked around a part. Usually, a few forms control the composition, wringing a surface by its edges.

While the paintings are formal, the meanings they accumulate are not. Abstraction, for Roth, is obviously not about a removed language of essences and geometry, or the cool propositional play of historical gestures. Roth's abstractions get hot from wrangling feelings into whatever forms can manage to hold them, and stay that way, refusing to let that energy dissipate by settling into comprehensible subject matter. On the contrary, the work's referentiality allows a viewer to name sensorial qualities and their interplay by recognizing them in painted, metaphorical objects, creating space to consider affective forces and their effects as scenes.

Roth takes this bodily imagination seriously, describing the experience of physical and emotional matter from the inside out. Of course the paintings are abstract. How else to account for the incongruity between the pierced specificity of a fresh heartbreak and grasping to recount it without cliché? Or, the unbinding lapse between the intimacy of interiority and the obscurity of the interior? Or, even, what our bones look like in fantasizing calcium releases? Roth defines qualitative distinctions primarily through color and texture: this slick scarlet ligament, that ochre snarl, copper ropes, a sanded viridian tooth. It is a way of illustrating contradictory impulses, the forced co-habitation of our passions, somehow held together within the form we call a body.

–Gaby Collins-Fernandez