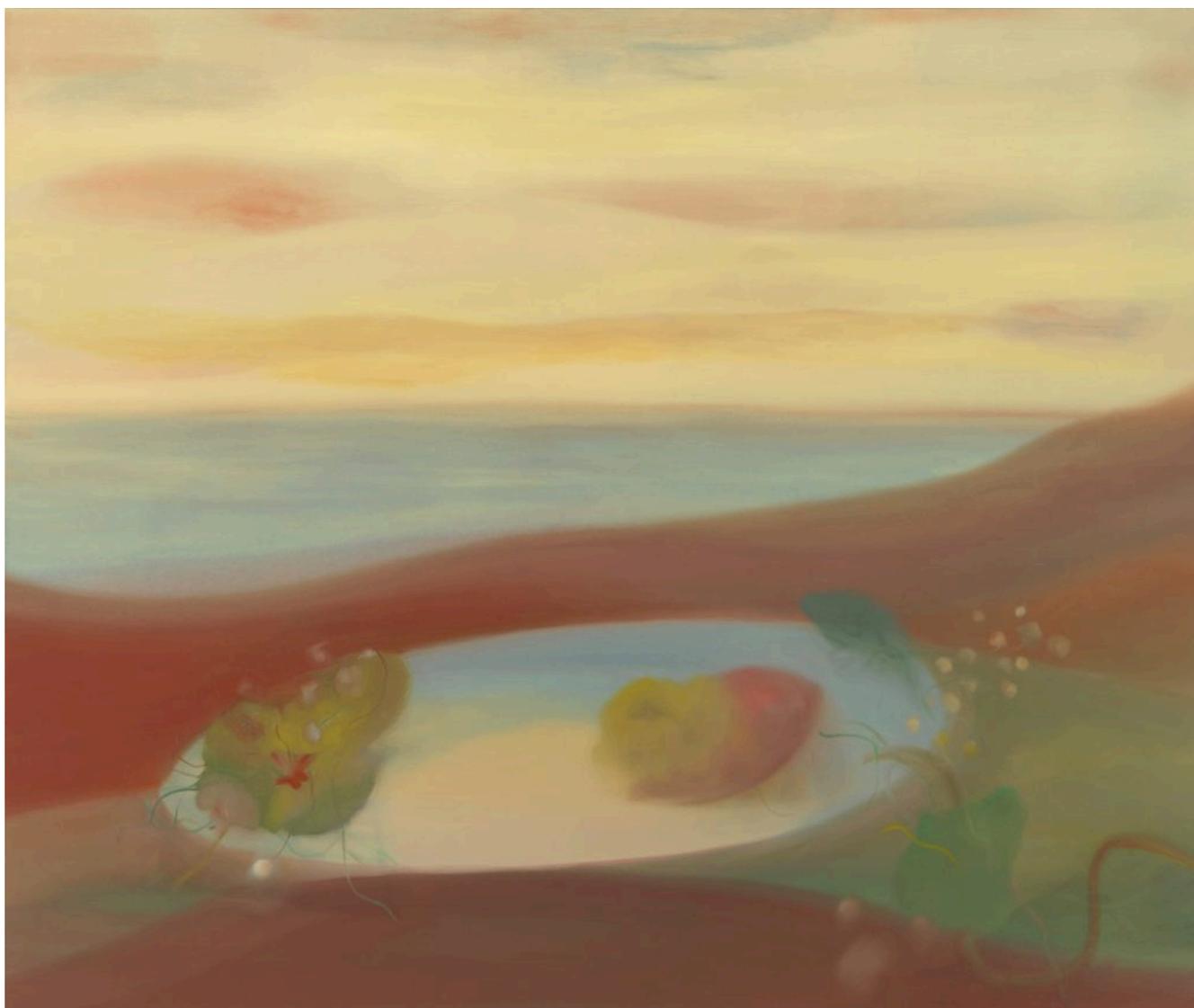


Michelle Wasson Paints Liminal Territories at Andrew Rafacz Gallery

In “Songs of the Marauder,” Michelle Wasson constructs luminous landscapes that hover between hopeful and ominous.

BY JEFFERSON GODARD | MARCH 9, 2026



Michelle Wasson, “a certain spring,” 2025, oil on canvas, 54” × 64”/Photo: Andrew Rafacz Gallery

Framed within a narrative of thresholds, oases and meditative landscapes, interstitial spaces are presented through vast terrains in Michelle Wasson's paintings in "Songs of the Marauder," at Andrew Rafacz Gallery. The varying scales of subjects float within the gallery and provide both hopeful and ominous feelings. Given the context of the title, we anticipate being entrenched in pillaged vistas and destroyed environments yet are granted access to moments of stillness that suggest either a pre-game setting or a post-victory haze. A visceral color palette is employed, constructing liminal zones that teeter between hopefulness and despair and blur the boundaries of what we think we see.

In "A Certain Spring," we are witness to a seaside vista containing two overscaled elements that are languidly arranged and presented on a stage. Vestiges of pistils and stamen abound and lean toward a dislocated body on display amongst the otherwise bucolic atmosphere. Bouncing off these hosts are ancillary spores that pop into the wind, possibly propagating future species. Bright skies here provide these bodies with sustenance and serve to shift our initial feelings of trepidation toward hopefulness.

Abstracted cut flowers in other works offer a sharp contrast to the larger topographies. Wasson challenges us with these still lifes, placing us in a new dimension that alternatively grounds the viewer, possibly even subverting them to an even safer space. They are rendered in the same time-shifting and somnambulistic haziness as her landscapes, further symbolizing an offering. While cut flowers often signify the end of a cycle, here they make a nod toward cultivation and grafting for a new order.



Michelle Wasson, "Sirens Pass," 2026, oil on canvas, 42" × 32"/Photo: Andrew Rafacz Gallery

“Sirens Pass” gives credence to this new world where a protective dome cultivates a thriving network against what appears to be calming waters or the eye within a storm. A purple pigmented ground and gray sky propose the aftermath of a battle that has occurred, yet still the ensconced mound has been left untouched. Another work, “Dreamwood,” also alludes to an aftermath of sorts, positioning the viewer instead within a place of refuge rather than above, reflecting upon the growing body inside. This interiority gestures that there may be hope after all.

Leaving Wasson’s world, we are adept in knowing that while there is protection, there is still a battle to wage, and we must be vigilant in the meantime. Amidst the uncertainty of where we are, these territories are ultimately creating the pretext for a sanguine future. Much like the dot that Wasson brings into several of these works, referencing a star or a beacon, there is a force out there to heal and protect us, if we are brave enough to withstand the marauders.

Michelle Wasson’s “Songs of the Marauder” is on view at Andrew Rafacz Gallery, 1749 West Chicago, through April 4.
