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These Painters Abandoned Brushes for Sledgehammers, Chainsaws, and Blowtorches

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Abby Leigh



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Competitive Skies 1, 2018

Johannes Vogt Gallery

At first glance, Abby Leigh's paintings look like lovely constellations of flowing lines and circles. Step closer, and the surfaces appear severely distressed—Leigh smashed them with a sledgehammer. The artist likens each mark to a scar, and the painting's surface to a skin. To make the works, she layers wax, oil, pigment, and paint atop dibond, then pierces, sands, and otherwise assaults the material. *Competitive Skies 2* (2018), for example, features intimate curlicue scribbles and stick figures alongside craters where the silver dibond peeps through—evidence of trauma, with displaced paint gathering around the edges. In *Sand* (2018), Leigh makes red marks against a light yellow background. Tracks and arrows suggest some kind of map, likening painting to cartography and placemaking. "Sledgehammering is an infliction of pain," Leigh told *Artsy*. "But when I'm finished with the work, the end result can be much more delicate."