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ARTH 702

Professor Ariane Noël de Tilly

500-word Exhibition Review

Aggressive Abstraction, Into the Neural Anatomy of Jana Marie Cariddi

Jana Marie Cariddi, *Amygdala*

Curated by Haley Clouser

SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA

October 17, 2025 – January 25, 2026

The amygdala is a small almond-shaped structure situated deep in the temporal lobe, responsible for the processing of memory, decision-making and emotional responses.¹

Amygdala, by Jana Marie Cariddi, turns the internal outward, that explodes on the walls in a wash of hyper-saturation and texture. The exhibition is presented in a single room with the pieces pinned in stark contrast against the white walls.

The immediate effect of *Amygdala* is colourful overstimulation. Cariddi has used an eclectic approach to materials, jamming together acrylic, resin, pumice stone, paint and silicone beads. This has created discordance, causing a friction between the smooth, glossy resin and acrylic against the abrasive quality of the pumice. The gallery space mediates as the white walls allow the erratic and colourful forms to breathe. Without the backdrop, the artworks may collapse on themselves due to the noise, but the emptiness of the room complements the density of the art, isolating them, like slides from a microscope

A focal point of the exhibition is the piece *The Force of All Things that Have Yet to Happen* (2025). The piece shows a toadlike form, situated right in the centre, flanked by vague hook

¹ Anthony Wright, "Limbic System: Amygdala," in *Neuroscience Online: An Electronic Textbook for the Neurosciences*, ed. John H. Byrne (McGovern Medical School at UTHHealth, 1997–present), sec. 4, chap. 6, last modified October 10, 2020, <https://nba.uth.tmc.edu/neuroscience/m/s4/chapter06.html>.

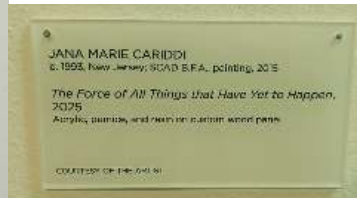
shaped appendices. This piece is made from acrylic, pumice and resin on a wood panel. The surface is covered with squirming gestures that could suggest microbial activity. However, the work could present the viewer with challenges of legibility. Despite the title *Amygdala* training the viewer to look for brain-like forms, the pieces by themselves could be deemed “aggressively abstract”. Without titles or wall texts, the viewer would be unlikely to recognize these shapes as any form of neural activity.

This abstract concept and illegibility suggests Cariddi is working within a realm of her abstraction that prioritises sensation over exaction. She has conformed to the expectation of organic shapes but deconstructed the prerogative by rendering it in synthetic, and colourful materials. As described by current art theory, this genre relies on irregular, organic shapes to evoke the essence of living forms without depicting them in an obvious manner.² Since the abstraction goes too far, the pieces hide the real meaning of trauma and memory, to point where the viewer is left appreciative of the surface textures while ignoring the meaning behind.

Overall, *Amygdala* leaves the viewer in a state of ambivalence. The pieces are compelling in their technical execution, yet a sense of distance remains. The translation of the messy and the wet reality of the human brain into hard and vague textural surfaces has created an experience that would be considered clean but closed in the emotional aspect. The viewer is offered a glimpse into a mind that has been reorganised, and polished, which is beautiful to look at but difficult to penetrate.

Word Count: 507

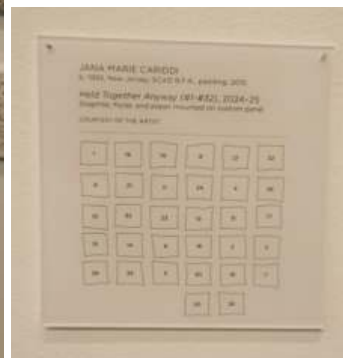
² Phillip Barcio, “The Role of Biomorphic Shapes in Abstract Art,” *Ideelart Magazine*, October 19, 2016, <https://ideelart.com/blogs/magazine/the-role-of-biomorphic-shapes-in-abstract-art>.



Installation view of exhibition Jana Marie Cariddi: Amygdala, SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA, October 17, 2025 – January 25, 2026.
Photo Credit: Tara Murali



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Bibliography

Barcio, Phillip. "The Role of Biomorphic Shapes in Abstract Art." *Ideelart Magazine*, October 19, 2016. <https://ideelart.com/blogs/magazine/the-role-of-biomorphic-shapes-in-abstract-art>.

Wright, Anthony. "Limbic System: Amygdala." In *Neuroscience Online: An Electronic Textbook for the Neurosciences*, edited by John H. Byrne. McGovern Medical School at UTHealth, 1997–present. Last modified October 10, 2020. <https://nba.uth.tmc.edu/neuroscience/m/s4/chapter06.html>.