

Art in America

Cornelia Foss at DFN - New York, New York - Brief Article

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Cornelia Foss is part of a loosely knit group of artists commonly described as "painterly realists," many of whom are associated with Long Island's scenic Hamptons region. Others include, preeminently, Jane Freilicher, Robert Dash and the late Fairfield Porter. They take Bonnard as a guiding spirit, and their style has, in essence, evolved out of Action Painting, although the painterly realist stroke is not quite as free and easy, being object-bound.

A good part of Foss's achievement over the years is to have developed a painterly realist style she can call her own. With this latest show, the influence of Jane Freilicher, for instance, has been pretty much left behind. Foss brings her touch and glance to the Hamptons' waterways, both fresh and oceanic. A body of water perfectly suited to her vigorously delicious style is Wainscott Pond. There were at least five Wainscott images in the show, all clouds and sun and grasses, almost merry in their brushy shorthand. My favorite was Wainscott Pond Fog, epic at 70 by 66 inches. Foss approaches the pond and sky with a reverence that is equal parts familiarity. A gray day is brought to high tones by the artist, without much color and seemingly without much effort.

More fog--and outspoken beauty --are to be had in Barcelona Point and Fog, a rendering of the tip of an islet in mist that is a dull aqua. Foss here presents us with a summa of the painterly realist effort in her gentle abstracting of landscape form and color that goes for the soul.

Foss obviously knows whereof she paints--there is a complicity of eye and hand that renders the scene perfectly recognizable yet also autographically personal. In the sure-footed lyricism of Foss's forms and figures are metaphors for the act of painting itself. At 72 by 66 inches, Lukas and Augie is like an occasional poem worked into a paean. Foss's husband and dog stand on a grassy field, Lukas's arms at his hips, the dog at his sunniest. Something about the light, the air, the weather--all crisply, peculiarly Hamptons-like--is shared with us. Foss gets it exactly right, on her own terms.

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