



Classical Realism Landscapes with a Twist

November 6, 2011

by Pat Rogers

DISPATCH - November 6, 2011 (Sunday; 2:37 p.m.)

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Sag Harbor, NY

Landscapes aren't all created equal. In two exhibitions at Grenning Gallery, some of the gallery's finest display their latest works. "Local Landscapes" exhibits area vistas by master painters. The "Gems" show presents smaller paintings by gallery artists, including some exhibiting in the landscape show. "Gems" opens this weekend while "Local Landscapes" had its final day yesterday (Nov 6).



"Sag Harbor Dingy" by Ben Fenske, 2011.
Oil, 23.5 x 31.5 inches. All images courtesy
Grenning Gallery.

"Local Landscapes" arises, in part, from a gallery tradition of inviting core gallery artists to visit the East End and paint here for a time.

Many painters are trained Classical Realism painters but go their own way. Ben Fenske's art is a prime example.

Trained at The Florence Academy of Art in Italy, the mecca for Classical Realism training, Fenske constantly pushes the bar in his paintings and in himself, said Laura Grenning of the Grenning Gallery.

Fenske was selected as one of "Twelve Artists To Watch in 2012" by "American Artist" magazine. In a sneak peak at the December 2011/January 2012 issue, Fenske is described as a "risk taker" who "refuses to conform or stop evolving" by Allison Malafronte, the senior editor of "American Artist."

"He has a restless, determined drive to understand his purpose as a painter and to not settle for what the rest of the art world deems acceptable," Malafronte writes.

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“Midcoast Harbor” by Ben Fenske, 2011. Oil, 31.5 x 39.5 inches.

Fenske is a long-time exhibitor with Grenning Gallery. He spends around four months annually in the Hamptons painting local landscapes and working on commissions, Grenning said.

“His work is not sweet, it’s very dramatic,” Grenning said. “He’s 100 percent plein air. You can feel it when looking at his landscapes.”

Culling also from American Impressionism, Fenske’s art appears loosely rendered when viewed close-up and becomes sharper with distance. An accurate drawing ability and “spot-on” relative values of light and dark are part of what makes Fenske’s work noteworthy, said Grenning.



“Secret Beach” by Ben Fenske. Oil, 44 by 59 inches.

Fenske isn’t the only master exhibiting in concurrent shows at the gallery. Melissa Franklin Sanchez studied at the Florence Academy of Art and the Slade School of Art in London, England. Her paintings in “Local Landscapes” reveal views around Southampton and Sag Harbor.

Like Fenske, Sanchez’s work is contemporary in subject and execution.



“Painting Water Lilies” by Melissa Franklin Sanchez, 2011. Oil, 12 x 16 inches.

Marc Dalesso’s paintings were made in a 2011 summer visit to the Hamptons. His landscapes were recently compared to the Hudson River School painters in relation to Dalesso’s “depth, refinement and scale” by the Grenning Gallery. His art (portraiture and landscapes) is grounded in Classical Realism and he’s considered an “anchor painter” of the movement, according to the gallery.

Dalesso has exhibited with the gallery since 1997. He had a solo show in August 2011 at Grenning Gallery. He’s based in Florence, Italy where he paints and teaches (including at the Florence Academy of Art).



“Noyac Beach Kites” by Marc Dalessio, 2011. Oil, 12 x 16 inches.

Nelson H. White is an award-winning painter who divides his time between Florence, Italy and CT. White has a special significance to the Grenning Gallery, said Grenning. She studied with White years ago while attending the Florence Academy of Art. The experience inspired Grenning to open a gallery devoted to Classical Realism after returning to the United States.

Now 79 years old, White remains an active and accomplished painter.

“He’s a very important person in the development of the gallery and in my life,” Grenning said. “He’s a big part of why I decided to open a gallery. His work continues to be amazing.”



“View from the South Ferry” by Nelson H. White, 2011. Oil, 9 x 16 inches.

BASIC FACTS: “Local Landscapes” is on view through November 6, 2011 at Grenning Gallery, 17 Washington Street, Sag Harbor. The show also includes art by Billy Raynor, Barbara Thomas, Beth Rundquist, Thomas Shelford, Sarah Greenbaum, Greg Horwitch and others. Paintings may be viewable by appointment. www.grenninggallery.com.

INSIDER KNOWLEDGE ON “LOCAL LANDSCAPES”: One of Horwitch’s paintings depicts the interior of Murf’s Backstreet Tavern in Sag Harbor, a notorious and beloved bar.

Dalessio’s painting, “Noyac Beach Kites” caught a new favorite sport in the Sag Harbor-Shelter Island waterways: Kitesurfing.

Fenske’s painting, “Secret Beach” depicts Cindy Neuendorf on the Sag Harbor beach. Neuendorf is the gallery manager at the Grenning Gallery. Her final weekend with the gallery coincides with the opening of the “Gems” exhibition.



“Lake in Connecticut” by Marc Dalessio, 2010. Oil, 47 x 59 inches.

UPCOMING: “Gems” opens on November 12 with the gallery’s “Annual Holiday Party” held from 5 to 7 p.m.

The group show features smaller works by core gallery artists. It remains on view through January 12, 2012.

“Gems” includes a new painting by area artist James Daga Albinson. His work depicts a view of Main Street in Sag Harbor.

The exhibition includes paintings by Marc Dalessio, Daniela Astone, Jimmy Sanders, Stephen Bauman, Leo Mancini-Hresko, Joe Altwer and Melissa Franklin Sanchez. An exhibition held upstairs features “major works” by Ramiro, Ben Fenske and Marc Dalessio.



“Val D’Allos, February” by Leo Mancini-Hresko, 2011.
Oil, 16 x 12 inches.