



Exhibition Stories: Brushing Away Cliché in “Beach Light: Paintings by Eileen Dawn Skretch”

October 21, 2016

by Pat Rogers

Looking at the work of Eileen Dawn Skretch, there’s no way of telling the canvases capturing a pause before approaching twilight settles on ocean beaches is a new area of interest. Skretch is an experienced plein air painter of bucolic East End landscapes, so it wouldn’t seem changing the view from land to sea would cause upheaval for the longtime professional artist. But the shift from the fields and marshes with their lush greens and subdued fog of grays didn’t prepare the artist for the shock of color that would encroach upon her palette when she decided to start tackling sunsets along the beach.

“The colors are unbelievable,” said Skretch. “It’s been a lot of fun and revelatory for me, painting with a whole new palette.”

Skretch didn’t go lightly into her new series of paintings of sunsets set at the beach. In fact, she fought the impulse to paint the outdoor scenes that unfolded weekly during a traditional Friday Night Cocktails gathering at the beach with friends. Although she dismissed sunsets as fodder for beginner artists, she couldn’t help but take photographs of the natural beauty that unfolded weekly.

Over the years, the photographs accumulated and began to have a presence in her studio that pulled at her imagination. Deciding to give in to what could be a cliché, Skretch embarked on a two-year project of capturing the ocean and beach during the time of day when light softens and the sky becomes poetic with clouds and myriad shades of pink, blue, peach, and purple—hues perfect for a painter to render.

Continuing to paint on wood—in the tradition of her landscape paintings—had another effect on her paintings. Working intently with the wood, the natural scenes of sky, ocean and sand moved further away from plein air and became an abstracted process, said Skretch. Color and seascape scenes melding with the grain of the wood and the painting process yielded a new type of process and sensation, moving Skretch away from traditional landscape to discover something new.

Her series of new works make up the exhibition “Beach Light: Paintings by Eileen Dawn Skretch” at the Southampton Historical Museum in Southampton Village, N.Y. The exhibition features 12 large-scale paintings and 10 small paintings made within the last two years. A Closing Reception takes place on Friday, October 21, 2016 from 5 to 7 p.m. The show closed on October 22, 2016.



“Pink and Blue” by Eileen Dawn Skretch, 2015. 48 x 72 inches. Photo: Gary Mamay. Courtesy of the artist.



“Bright Lights” by Eileen Dawn Skretch, 2016. 48 x 96 inches. Photo: Gary Mamay. Courtesy of the artist.



“Super Moon” by Eileen Dawn Skretch, 2015. 48 x 72 inches. Photo: Gary Mamay.

Born and raised in Southampton, NY to a farming family, Eileen Dawn Skretch has a natural affinity to the landscape. Her childhood lessons incorporated the observation and appreciation of fields, waterways and endless skies. She begins her oil paintings with sheets of birch veneered plywood and creates panels as small as 4 x 6 inches to 4 x 8 feet through her own woodworking. The wood grain is an essential aspect of the design, often becoming the pattern of the clouds or ripples in the water. Painting in plein air when possible, Eileen prefers working small on site (4 x 6 inches or 8 x 10 inches) and then brings studies and reference photos to her studio to make her paintings.



Eileen Dawn Skretch. Courtesy of The Southampton Historical Museum.

BASIC FACTS: “Beach Light: Paintings by Eileen Dawn Skretch” is on view from May 20 to October 22, 2016 at the Sayre Barn of the Southampton Historical Museum. A Closing Reception takes place on Friday, October 21, 2016 from 5 to 7 p.m. The Sayre Barn is located on the Rogers Mansion Complex of the Southampton Historical Museum, 17 Meeting House Ln, Southampton, NY 11968. www.southamptonhistoricalmuseum.org.

Eileen Dawn Skretch is based in Southampton, N.Y. Her art can be viewed at www.eileendawnskretch.com. She is represented by South Street Gallery in Greenport, N.Y. www.thesouthstreetgallery.com.

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