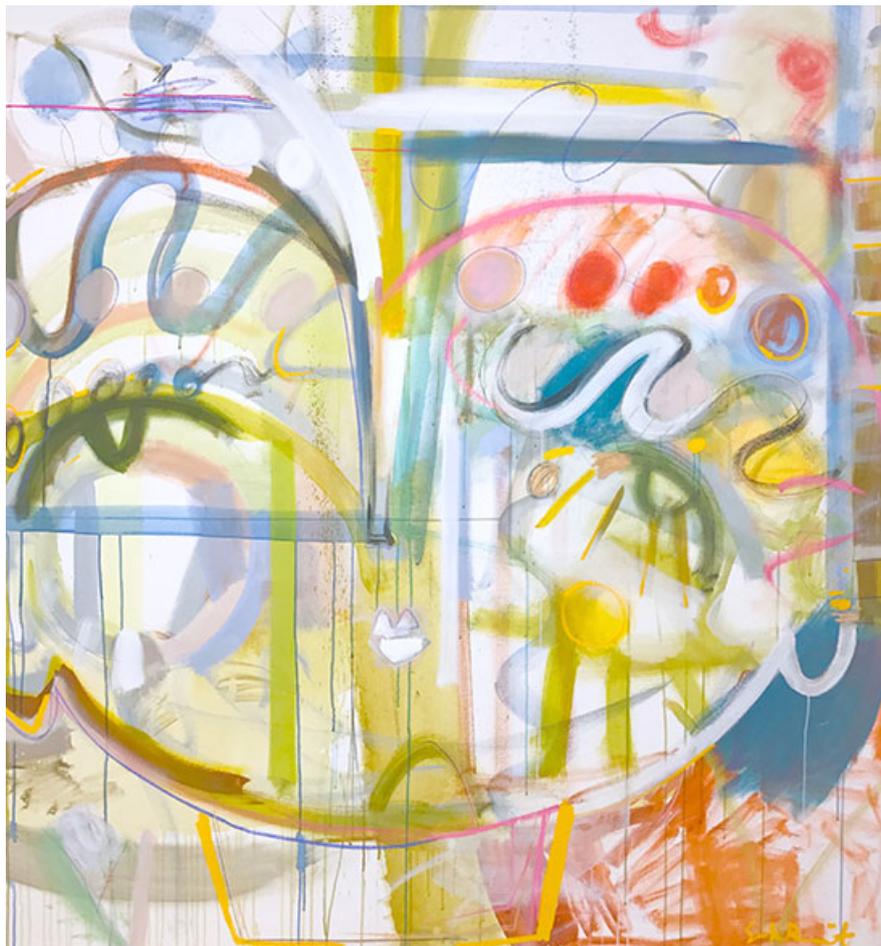


## ART REVIEW: Sally King Benedict Brings Smiling Expressionism to Quogue

August 16, 2017

by Charles A. Riley II

Partway around my second tour of the [Sally King Benedict](#) show of paintings and drawings pulsing with bright colors at Quogue Gallery, I was still searching for the right word for the arc sweeping upward in many of the works. Then I returned to the aptly titled *Going Light and Bright Face*. The painting—beaming out from the main wall in the light-filled rear gallery as the keynote to the exhibition—gave me the answer: The billowing gesture should be read as a smile.

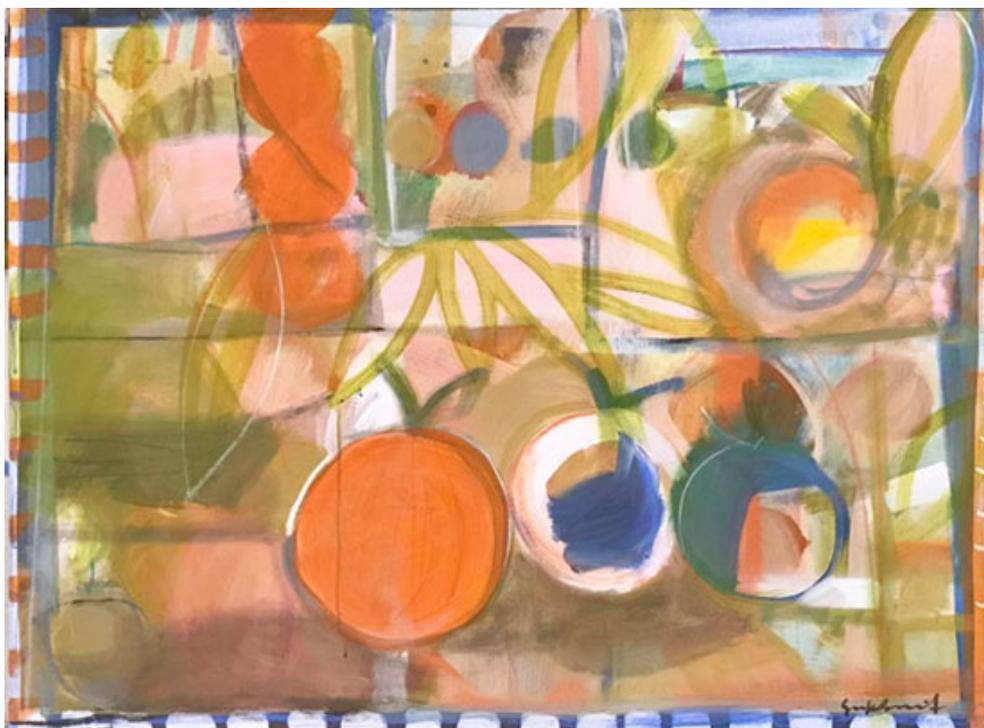


“Going Light and Bright Face” by Sally King Benedict, 2017. Mixed Media on Canvas, 80 x 74 inches. Courtesy of Quogue Gallery.

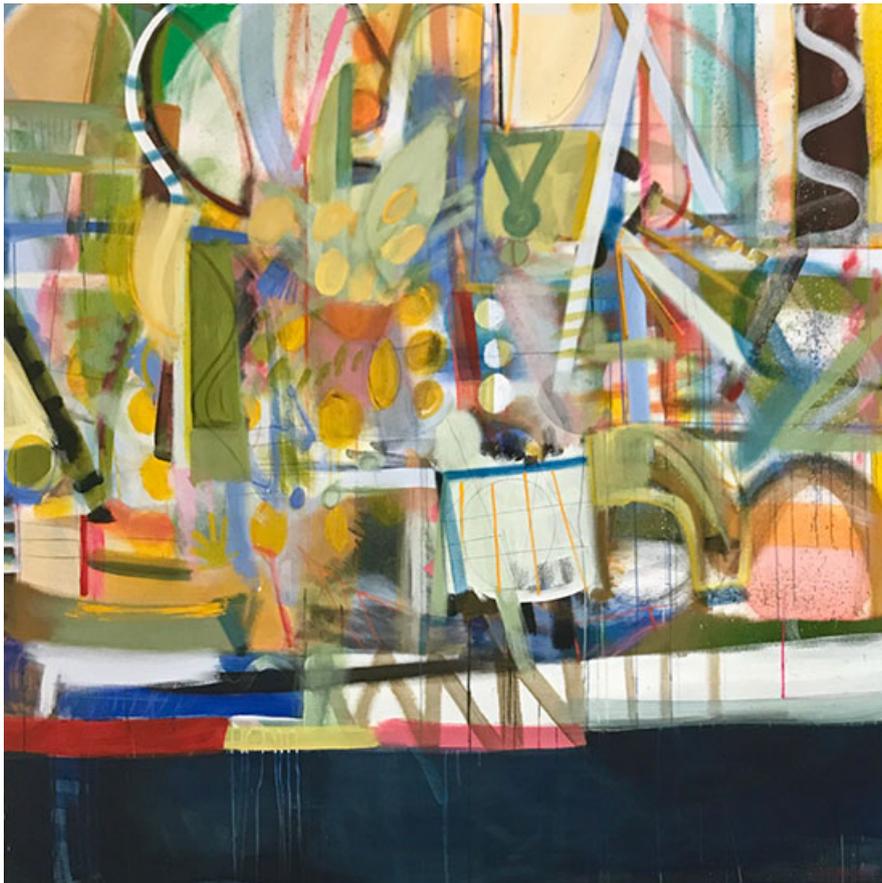
Influenced by Kenneth Clark's charming essay on "the smile of reason" in "Civilisation," I suddenly could grasp the tenor of the whole "Through Ocean Eyes" exhibition in one welcome curve. As Clark recognized, the "smart" smile in the portraits of the age of Voltaire and the capable grin of Benedict's sure hand in the studio stand in contrast to the vacuous laughter of the Rococo period, to which in our time we can add the grimace of [de Kooning](#)'s women, the vacuous idiocy of the emoji, or the smartass smirk of [Jeff Koons](#). Benedict bestows the heartfelt smile of hospitality in these abstract answers to the faces of [Alexei Jawlensky](#).

Many other past masters assert their reputations in the company of Benedict's cheerful paintings, ink drawings and hand-painted ceramic plates. Anytime the windows are flung open on sparkling bays, the name Matisse floats to the surface, and his rival Picasso worked with ceramists at the Madoura studios, also on the Riviera, dashing off bold flourishes on white clay with his usual panache.

With regard to the paintings, while [Helen Frankenthaler](#) and [Jane Freilicher](#) employ some of the same palette as Benedict, it was their friend [Grace Hartigan](#) who came to mind as I stood before the heavier fare of Benedict's juxtaposed still lifes of fruit. Two of these stood out for me: *Oranges in Summer*, a still life steeped in honeyed sunlight; and the more complex vertical painting *Gathering Bright Fruit*, with its versatile range of expressionist ideas, from drips to grids replete with mark-making that surrounds the swirls of lemon yellow.



"Oranges in Summer" by Sally King Benedict. Mixed media on canvas, 30 x 40 inches. Courtesy of Quogue Gallery.

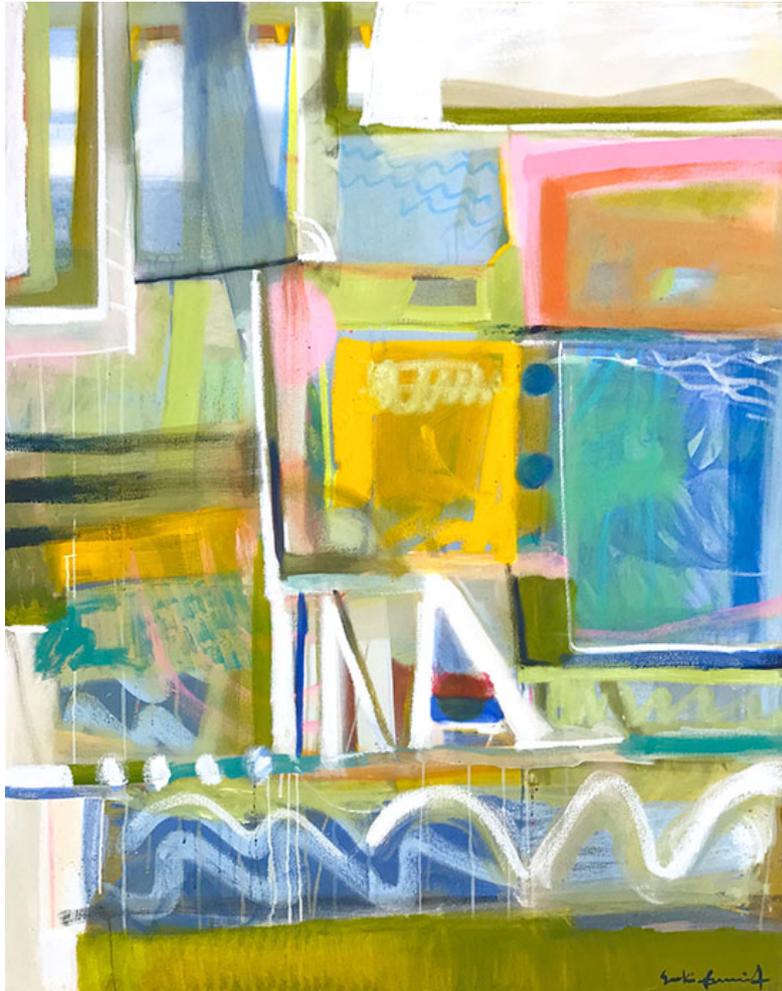


"Gathering Bright Fruit" by Sally King Benedict. Mixed media on canvas, 72 x 72 inches. Courtesy of The Quogue Gallery.

Part of the show's appeal is its sporty nonchalance. Witness the six tennis balls along the frieze-like bottom edge of *Court in Dreams*, the Platonic ideal of a tennis player's fancy. This painting is on view in the front room of the Quogue Gallery, where gallery owners Chester and Christy Murray have archly juxtaposed Benedict's *By the Bays Beach*, a bravura Abstract Expressionist take on the seascape, with one of the strongest paintings from their recent Ben Wilson show (reviewed [here](#) last month). Exhibiting the two paintings together deftly demonstrates the continuum from the glory days of the AbEx movement in New York during the 1950s to its evolutionary present.



"Court in Dreams" by Sally King Benedict. Mixed media on canvas, 48 x 60 inches. Courtesy of The Quogue Gallery.



“By the Bays Beach” by Sally King Benedict. Mixed Media on Canvas, 50 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the Quogue Gallery.

Although new to the East End and New York audiences, Sally King Benedict has become a favorite among art collectors in the South and has a sculpture in the Pop Culture gallery of the World of Coca-Cola museum in Atlanta as part of the facility’s 10th anniversary show. She grew up in Atlanta, where she still lives and works; her husband is from Long Island. She studied studio art and earned her BA a decade ago at the College of Charleston. Her work has graced the pages of the major design magazines, including Elle Decor, Architectural Digest, and Southern Living, among others.

She has collaborated with Nantucket-based photographer [Nathan Coe](#) as well as jewelry and fashion designers on limited editions. The appealing confidence of the ceramics in the show solidly confirms her design credentials, while demonstrating the same gift for expression that is beautifully apparent in all the paintings, drawings and collages on view. In all, the smiles embedded in this promising East End debut are sure to resonate with all art lovers passing through the doors of the Quogue Gallery.

---

**BASIC FACTS:** “Sally King Benedict: Through Ocean Eyes” is on view August 10 through August

30, 2017 at the Quogue Gallery, 44 Quogue Street, Quogue, NY 11959. [Quoguegallery.com](http://Quoguegallery.com)

---

Copyright 2017 Hamptons Art Hub LLC. All rights reserved.