JANE FREILICHER

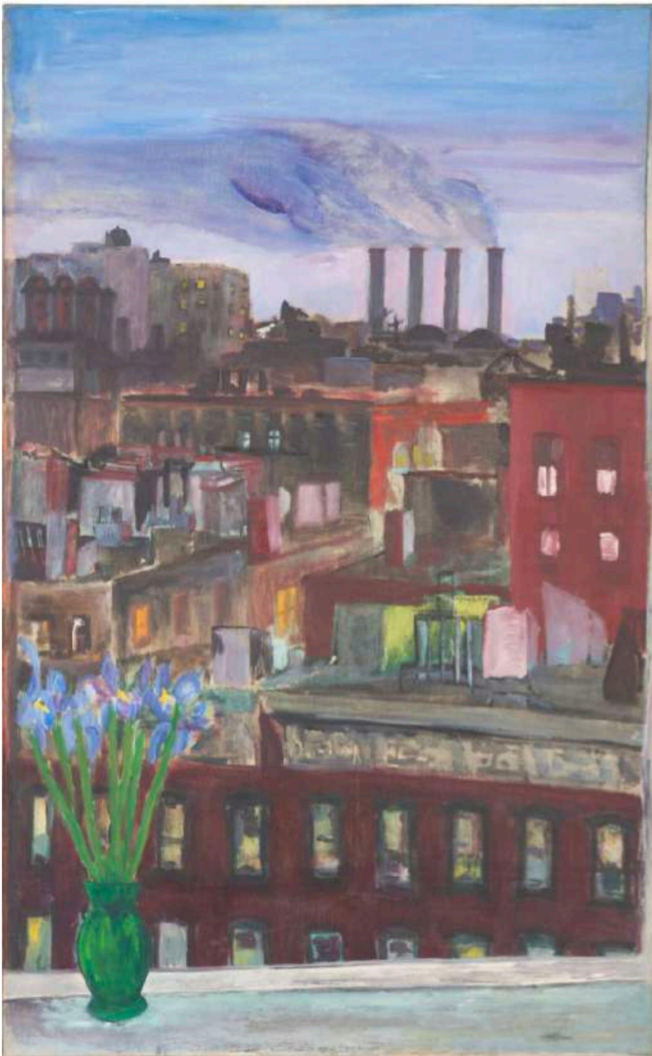
SELECTED PRESS

VOGUE

Jane Freilicher Is the "Absurdly Underrated" Artist Who Painted Flowers Like No One Else Could

JULIA FELSENTHAL
APRIL 20, 2018

[EXTRACT]



Jane Freilicher, Early New York Evening, 1954
Photo: Courtesy of Paul Kasmin Gallery

Jane Freilicher in the studio, 1972, Photo: Joe Hazan.

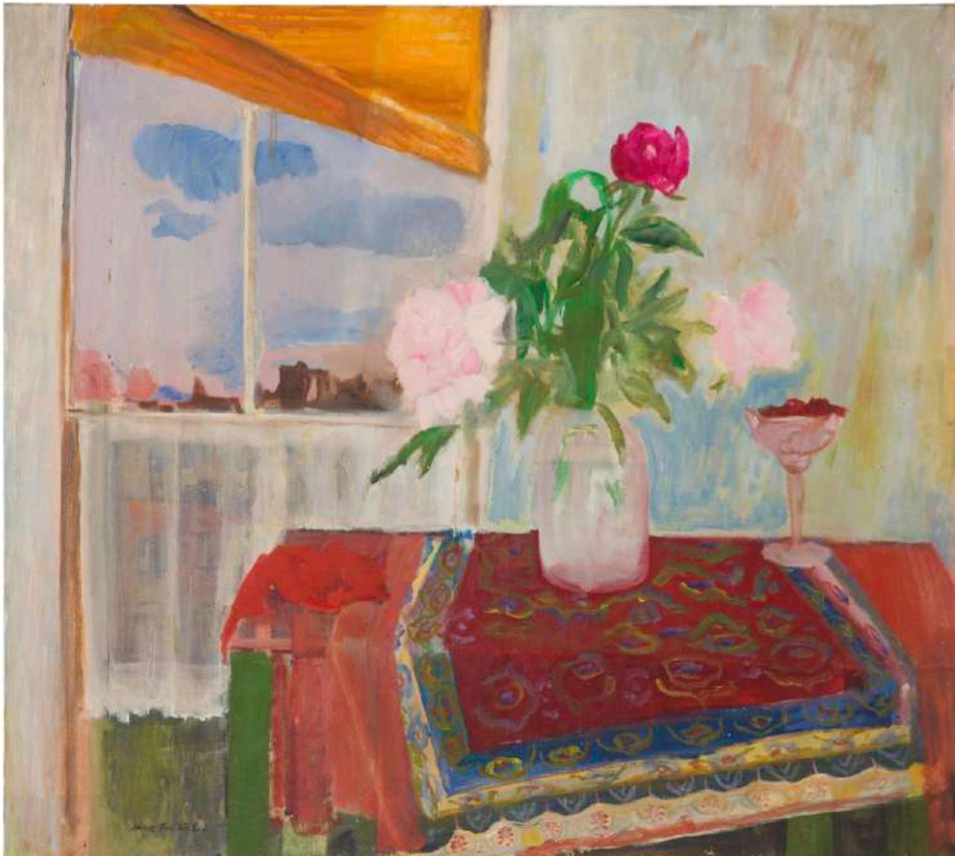
Jane Freilicher, The Painting Table, 1954. Photo: Courtesy of Paul Kasmin Gallery.

The paintings in the Kasmin show—all but two date back to the ’50s (many hung in her and Ashbery’s homes)—were made in the heady early days of these creative friendships (Hazan compares her mother and the poets to Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe in Just Kids). It was an era when O’Hara, who wrote a slew of poems devoted to “Jane,” would come over and help her stretch her canvases; when Ashbery would drop by to watch her paint; when Kenneth Koch, her onetime upstairs neighbor, would don a gorilla mask and scare passengers on the elevated train that rumbled past their windows. (He once said of Freilicher: “I never enjoyed conversation with anyone so much in my

life.") A pair of paintings were made in 1952, the year that Ashbery, O'Hara, and James Schuyler motored out to the Hamptons to shoot a short film penned by Schuyler called Presenting Jane. They never finished it, but recently recovered clips of the footage reveal a very young Freilicher seemingly walking on water.

Some of the earliest works may even have been made before Freilicher took up with Hazan, when she was involved in an on-again, off-again romance with the artist Larry Rivers, whom she met when he took a gig as a saxophonist in her first husband's jazz band (that marriage lasted only a few years, though Freilicher, née Niederhoffer, kept his name for the rest of her life). It was she who suggested Rivers take up painting and train, as she did, under the legendary teacher Hans Hoffman.

[…]



Jane Freilicher, Peonies on a Table, 1954. Photo: Courtesy of Paul Kasmin Gallery

The Kasmin show reveals the origins of Freilicher's practice, the experimentation of a painter in her late 20s and early 30s beginning to map out the contours of her life's work, the "trajectories," as Paul Kasmin director Mariska Nietzman puts it, "that she followed for 50 years." Aside from a pair of portraits—one from the early '50s, of a doll-like girl, presumably based on the artist's younger self; another a close-cropped self-portrait from the early '60s—these are interior still lifes and views from the windows of her grim early studios (Hazan believes many of them were painted in an apartment her mother sublet in the East Village for just $11.35 a month). Almost all include the cut flowers that would become her signature. ("Sometimes it is almost as if the rest of a painting is a pretext for the flowers," wrote the critic William Zimmer in 1999.) Here, lilacs tumble from an unassuming vase in a room green with early spring light; irises glow ultraviolet against a polluted crepuscular sky, New York's witching hour when the redbrick buildings develop an eerie phosphorescence; cotton candy peonies bend toward a window, their sticky

sweetness cut by the harsh diagonal of a wonky, uneven window shade. In 1957's The Electric Fan, sketchily rendered peach and purple blooms set the tone for an interior still life smeared expressively in a riotous ultra-femme palette (it calls to mind the colors in The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel, which also happens to be set in '50s New York). In 1956's Flowers in Armchair, the bouquet itself is a leading lady: As the poet Nathan Kernan puts it in an essay for the show's catalog, the arrangement "sits for its portrait in place of the human figure one would expect." It poses a sort of Magritte-ean provocation: These are not (just) flowers?

Jane Freilicher, Flowers in Armchair, 1956. Photo: Courtesy of Paul Kasmin Gallery

A note on that; flowers seem easy; they're not. Freilicher's blooms, Francine Prose once observed, "can persuade you that you are seeing flowers for the first time and in an entirely new way." The artist's friend and contemporary, the painter Alex Katz, agreed. "No one painted flowers or their color the way Jane did," he said, speaking at Freilicher's 2014 memorial service. "Flowers are very hard to paint, much harder than faces or landscapes."

[…]

Views change. Flowers – particularly ones that have been snipped – die. Time marches in only one direction. The constant is one's unique way of looking. Brown send me another Katz quote from Freilicher's memorial: "Jane's paintings have nothing to do with the two things that make things go to a larger public. One is fashion and the other is progress. Jane thought outside of that. Jane's paintings will have a long shelf life."

Jane Freilicher, Interior, 1954. Photo: Courtesy of Paul Kasmin Gallery

Views change. Flowers—particularly ones that have been snipped—die. Time marches in only one direction. The constant is one's unique way of looking. Brown sent me another Katz quote from Freilicher's memorial: "Jane's paintings have nothing to do with two things that made things go to a larger public. One is fashion and the other is progress. Jane thought outside of that. Jane's paintings will have a long shelf life."

THE ART NEWSPAPER

Private view: our pick of April gallery shows
New shows at commercial galleries, from emerging names to rediscovered talents

JAMES H. MILLER

16th April 2018 14:00 GMT

Jane Freilicher, *Self-Portrait*, ca. 1960, oil on linen, 12 1/8 x 13 1/8 inches, 30.8 x 33.3 cm.
Courtesy of the estate of Jane Freilicher and Paul Kasmin Gallery. Photo by Christopher Stach.

[EXTRACT]

Jane Freilicher: 50s New York
Paul Kasmin, New York 18 April-9 June

The poet Frank O'Hara described the paintings of Jane Freilicher (1924-2014) as "true and silently risqué", while the painter Fairfield Porter called them "traditional and radical". Paul Kasmin's first solo show of the Greenwich Village painter's estate (formerly represented by Tibor de Nagy) concentrates on work from the 1950s, revealing quiet intensities beneath the humble, Bonnard-like interiors, still-lifes and portraits. Freilicher's contemplative work from the 50s calls attention to a mid-century painting alternative. Prices range from $40,000 to $250,000.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY
The New York Times

ADAA: A Fair to Remember Starts a Month of Art Show Madness

Roberta Smith

March 1st, 2018

Nudes by Jane Freilicher at the Paul Kasmin Gallery's booth. Credit: Joshua Bright for The New York Times.

[EXTRACT]

The New Old

Several galleries have solo shows of older material often never seen before (or not lately). In three instances works from the 1960s or '70s underscore the achievements of distinguished female artists. **Anglim Gilbert** has an extraordinary trove of mostly delicate drawings of women's bodies by the pioneering Lynn Hershman Leeson; all were discovered when the artist recently moved house. At **Paul Kasmin**: Jane Freilicher's silken paintings of self-possessed nudes add stunningly to her excursions still life and landscape. **Fergus McCaffrey** has brought back a series of painting-reliefs by the Italian artist Carol Rama from her recent show at the New Museum, where their truth-to-materials toughness was sometimes lost in the sexual extravagance of her watercolors and etchings.

ARTNEWS

At the 30th-Anniversary ADAA Art Show, Dealers Bring the New and Artists Lampoon Trump

Alex Greenberger and Andrew Russeth

February 27, 2018

[EXTRACT]

In a change-up from past years, the ADAA Art Show is opening a full week before the Armory Show and its satellite fairs in New York, which gave its gala vernissage tonight at the Park Avenue Armory an especially luxurious air. There was nowhere else to be—or, at least, fewer places to be. The crowd for the well-loved drinks and canapés—among its attendees were collectors Donald B. Marron and Martin Z. Margulies and Museum of Modern Art painting and sculpture curator Laura Hoptman—was perhaps a bit smaller than usual, and a solid percentage of the roughly 70 dealers have organized superb booths, so it all felt like a nice aperitif before the whirlwind of next week.

Paul Kasmin was celebrating its new position as representative of the estate of Jane Freilicher, the veteran New York painter who died in 2014, with an elegant display of female nudes by the artist, who is better known for her poetic landscapes and cityscapes. Though the pieces date from the 1960s and '70s, they look quite contemporary at a moment when figurative painting is resurgent, and Molly Taylor, the press director of Kasmin, said that people had been coming up to the booth asking, "Is the artist going to be here?" Alas, they will not be able to meet her, but they can pick up a painting for $95,000 to $125,000. (Bonus points for Kasmin: the gallery has opted to use the Armory's raw wood for its booth. Very fresh.

ARTFORUM

February 2016
by Prudence Peiffer

Jane Frelicher, *Window*, 2011, oil on linen, 32 x 32”

“She is not dangerous or rare, / adventure precedes her like a train, / her beauty is general, as sun and air / are secretly near, like Jane.” So wrote Frank O’Hara in an ode to Jane Freilicher that ably describes the art of his friend: Her paintings highlight the simplest subjects of wildflowers stuck in soup cans and pitchers, vast tracks of land on the East End of Long Island, and still lifes set up in her West Village apartment studio, often against a window looking out over the city’s rooftops and water towers. This exhibition, the artist’s twenty-first at Tibor de Nagy, was called “Theme and Variations.” Freilicher’s theme has always been the presence of living nature (even indoors and in the city). But the variations are what make that motif, in all its “general” beauty, empathetic—especially considering that she painted the same view for more than five decades, until her death in 2014 at the age of ninety.

Freilicher’s still lifes are rarely still. *Butterfly Weed and Goldenrod*, 1967, has a great messiness and expedience to its marks that reflect both the artist’s roots in Hans Hofmann’s school of abstraction and the composition’s own wild subjects brought inside. (Exceptions feel purposeful, such as her watercolor of hydrangeas here from 1990, in which the entire page takes on the brittle properties of a dried flower.)

Like her friend and fellow Southampton painter Fairfield Porter, Freilicher absorbed Pierre Bonnard's and Henri Matisse's subtle devastations of domestic life—what O'Hara, in another poem about Freilicher's art, described as "The eagerness of objects to / be what we are afraid to do," which "cannot help but move us." One of the strongest works in the show, *Window*, 2011, is a collection of botanicals in various containers, sitting on a sill in front of a roof city-scape. Observing the straightforward flat shapes and colors of the vases and their blooms, I immediately thought of my favorite painting in New York, Matisse's *Blue Window*, 1913, at the Museum of Modern Art, in which a collection of isolated objects (including a flower vase) are displayed in front of a large window whose abstracted trees rhyme with the circular forms of the interior still life in a constant play of reflection. Freilicher's scene appears to take place on a misty morning and, if you look closely, with a lovely strangeness: A central green shadow might be a distant tree or a plant's reflection; the line of the sill wavers and its top edge does not connect from right to left; a yellow bloom is suspended in midair, and then there's the surprise of a fifth vase that is empty; the artist signs her name in the void where the bouquet would be. Further countering static repose, and with no small wit, the tall, curved, and stumpy containers are mirrored in the buildings behind them. We see this again in the terrific early pastel *Untitled (Studio Table and Landscape)*, 1968, in which a can of paintbrushes is in direct dialogue with the bristly bush just behind, outside the window.

Sometimes we proceed past that frame and into the landscape itself. There were four such paintings of Water Mill, Long Island, in the show; my favorite was *The Season*, 2005, a riotous composition centering on a blue bay and a complementary thicket of ocher grasses. Rain seems to be arriving from the top of the picture, and the inlet sliver that cuts across the middle of the canvas whips the blues into the greens, oranges, and browns of the autumn reeds, much as I imagine they would blend in nature—a color field painting in the most literal sense.

As her exhibition with Jane Wilson at the Parrish Art Museum that also closed last month wonderfully demonstrated, Freilicher wasn't afraid to muddy her scapes. The twinned scene in Tibor de Nagy's *September Landscape* and *Bright Day*, both 1973, was also found at the Parrish, though the title of that 2001 painting tells of more ominous changes over time: *Landscape with Construction Site*. But then, Freilicher offers us a never-ending view.

https://www.artforum.com/inprint/issue=201602&id=57483

Jane Freilicher, “Recent Paintings and Prints

Tibor de Nagy | March 10 – April 16, 2011

April 6, 2011
By John Yau

Jane Freilicher embarked upon her enduring subject in the mid 1950s, at the height of Abstract Expressionism. For nearly 60 years, and through the comings and goings of different styles (Pop art, Minimalism, Conceptual art, Neo-Expressionism), she has painted a vase of flowers in front of a window. The view outside is either urban or pastoral. Working within this deceptively simple and seemingly straightforward pairing, she has become a singular painter who has synthesized a core of formal preoccupations with a wide range of feelings in the most unexpected and often delightful ways. Her very particular way of seeing seems to have been there from the beginning. In “Early New York Evening” (1954), a cluster of stalks echoes the four ConEd smokestacks on the horizon, their plumes of dusky violet smoke briefly becoming flowers before dissolving into the violet evening sky. Such surprising visual rhymes clue us into the fact that Freilicher’s realism has always been a subtle brew of desire and observation, imagination and truthfulness.

Both the exhibition and the scale are modest, eight paintings and two lithographs, with the largest painting, “Yellow” (2009), measuring 32 by 40 inches. The colors are muted and air is hazy—it’s as if everything is losing its edge, on the brink of melting into the air. There is a table on which a glass vase holds a few different flowers, some of which are yellow, along with a small sculpture of a torso, a tin can, a magenta vase (possibly a Van Briggle), and some postcards and photographs, leaning against an invisible support and curling on the table. On the other side of this landscape of ghostly sentinels is the city, for the table has been pushed up against a window. You don’t see the window frame, so the outside and inside worlds meet, and you cannot tell where one ends and the other begins. Is that a postcard or a building? It is this state of confusion that Freilicher knowingly evokes. It calls forth a sense of vertigo and fragility, which the juxtaposition of an object-laden table and cityscape quietly enhance.

In the square “Harmonic Convergence” (2008), a vase of flowers stands on a round table, whose plane has tilted toward the picture plane. Beginning with the two rectangles closest to the table and flowers, there is an atmosphere of ambiguity. What are the rectangles behind the vase? Buildings or paintings, forms or planes, volumes or flat surfaces? The artist declares that they are both, that they are buildings and paintings within a painting. Confusion, we discover for ourselves, can be both a pleasure and the beginning of reflection. The material world becomes insubstantial. It seems that Freilicher is recording the process of fading from this world, the journey all of us have undertaken.

As the sculptor Joyce Robins told me the night before I went to see the show: “Freilicher is our Morandi.”

The New York Times
Art in Review

Summer Pictures

Julie Saul Gallery
535 West 22nd Street, Chelsea
Through Sept. 12

When it comes to painting, the fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi knows what he likes and then some. "Summer Pictures," the small, succinct exhibition of work by his friends and one relation that he has organized at the Saul gallery, makes everything, familiar or not, look fresh and relevant. Jane Freilicher's quiet, elegantly colored still lifes — a vase of hydrangea and a scattering of objects on a table overlooking a field — are at their Morandi-like best in the company of Lisa Sanditz's semi-abstract pastoral "Z Park South" and Maureen Gallace's two small, unfussy landscapes. Ms. Gallace's works include a vista of houses and, less usual for this artist, a buttery shoreline view of the setting sun.

The three cupcakes looming large in a small, new and also buttery painting by Wayne Thiebaud have the presence of beach cabanas and introduce a theme, food, that Maira Kalman's delightful gouaches expand upon with breakfast scenes. We see the meal laid out or under way in India, Kentucky and Jerusalem and cation by a woman named Sabine, who wears a turban and caftan as if taking a break from modeling for Matisse. Also depicted is a lavish spread, with white cloth and china, for the mysterious "Herring and Philosophy Club." Apparently only one of the four members who were expected showed up (or arrived early), and that person ate and ran.

Next to Ms. Kalman's images two paintings by Adrianne Lobel, a well-known set and production designer for theater, opera and dance, return to nature with prismatic, muscularly rendered images of trees that bring to mind the work of Benjamin Butler. An ethereal collage by Donna Chung, sprinkled with bits of color, abstract forms and cut-out images, implies a realm that is more astral than earthbound. And pure abstraction is well represented by the repeating stacks of brilliantly colored circles in a large untitled canvas from around 1970 by Julia Sherman, a distant cousin of Mr. Mizrahi's, whose work has inspired some of his fabric designs. That's interesting information, but this show transcends personal connections.

ROBERTA SMITH

The New York Times

Go Ahead, Expect Surprises

August 9, 2007
Buy Holland Cotter

NeoIntegrity at Derek Eller Gallery, organized by Keith Mayerson, features works from about 190 artists.

MICHAEL NAGLE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Artists make great exhibition curators. They have expert eyes, a personal stake in the game and contacts with all kinds of other artists, including those who ride under the establishment radar. Museum surveys of contemporary art rarely produce surprises. Artist-organized gallery shows almost always do.

And “NeoIntegrity” at Derek Eller Gallery does. Put together — amassed is the word — by the painter Keith Mayerson, it’s striking for its size alone. With pieces by about 190 artists in a space the size of a modest one-bedroom apartment, it’s the biggest little show of the summer — one of the most eclectic and one of the best.

In planning it Mr. Mayerson ransacked his address book and memory bank. He called on friends, neighbors, lovers, ex-teachers, past and present students, close colleagues and others he knew only from afar. If a certain painting knocked him out on a routine studio visit a decade ago, chances are that it, or something like it, is here.

This archival approach encompasses well-known figures (Nayland Blake, Ross Bleckner, James Siena) and those fresh on the scene. Age is not a selection factor: Ed Clark and Jane Freilicher, with decades-long careers, rub shoulders with newbies. And although painting is dominant, there is a lot more to see. Scott Hug and Michael Magnan deliver a patriotic pizza box; Sam Gordon an episodic video; and Hiroshi Sunari a ginko sapling grown from seeds that survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

Variety is the bottom line, and one would expect no less from Mr. Mayerson, an artist of multifarious accomplishments. He made his New York debut in a 1994 group show with a virtuosic book-length sequence of cartoon drawings about Pinocchio. It was fantastic, and his fans were expecting more of the same in his solo debut at Jay Gorney three years later; instead they got woozy paintings of rainbows and gurus.

Then he was in and out of sight for several years, teaching at New York University. In 2003 Eller gave him a big-small solo — many paintings, tiny room — of brushy, jaundice-toned pictures loosely related to a "Hamlet" theme. Last season at Eller Mr. Mayerson did a portrait show of his heroes: Judy Garland, John Lennon, Audrey Hepburn, Jimi Hendrix, Bugs Bunny, Andy Warhol and Arthur Rimbaud. It was great. It had a kind of Rembrandt-Andy feel, soulful old master meets Pop queer. It was serious and funny at the same time.

The same can be said for "NeoIntegrity," beginning with its title. Mr. Mayerson explains in a gallery news release that when he was given the go-ahead for the group show, he decided to take the opportunity to start an art movement. He even wrote a position paper for it, "The NeoIntegrity Manifesto."

On the one hand the whole business is send-up, a joke. Movements are a thing of the past, when there was one kind of art and another kind, and that was it. Now there's so much of so many things that nothing can or needs to be defined. Mr. Mayerson has always been very pro-muchness as an artist, thinker and curator. He embraces it, which is what makes his work feel generous, makes wherever he takes it feel right.

Some would say that integrity as a moral quality is also a thing of the past, with the art world swimming in money, pumping out product, ignoring conflicts of interest and so on. Mr. Mayerson's response is not to scold but to ask, "What to do?" Hence the manifesto, an 11-point declaration that defines art as a humanist endeavor. But each definition comes with a modifying, even contradictory statement. Art should reflect the artist; art should reflect the culture. Art should not be a commodity; but if it is, that's O.K.

In the end there's something here for almost everyone to accept or reject. This is the muchness factor in operation again. One definition of integrity is, after all, wholeness, completeness, taking it all in. And taking it all in, artwise, is what Mr. Mayerson's show is about.

You want still-life painting? Ingrid Arneberg and Ann Craven paint pretty flowers. Steve Balkin, Hugh Van Dusen and Neil MacDonald do landscapes. Portraiture accounts for a large slice of material. Although some sitters are not identified — Marvin Mattelson paints an "Eric," Enoc Perez a "Carole," Kelley Walker a gondolier — a tip toward celebrity faces is pronounced. In addition to Kathe Burkhart's likeness of Elizabeth Taylor and Eric Doeringer's of Elizabeth Peyton, you'll find Kembra Pfahler captured by Travis Hutchins; Jane Fonda by Carol Bove; and a sensational full-length Nancy Sinatra by Stephen Tashjian, the artist known as Tabboo!

A few portraits are more naughty than nice. Neither the self-pleasuring "Christian" in a Billy Sullivan painting nor the snout-nosed sitter in Matt Borruso's "Magenta" is destined for the National Portrait Gallery.

Design is art-world fashionable at present, and you'll find examples here: a ceramic pot by Renee So, a fabric swatch collage by Chris Bogia (very nice), and three player pianos grafted together, courtesy of Dan Knapp. But perhaps the most intriguing category is the one corresponding to the "sublime," an aesthetic term that Mr. Mayerson uses with unqualified enthusiasm in his manifesto.

It's hard to say exactly what he means by it. Exquisite workmanship? Andrew Madrid's "American Flag," Jessie Mott's "Hamster" and Pam Lins's "Polar Bear Painting" all qualify, as does the contribution of several of the show's awesomely polished cartoonists, Nick Bertozzi, Brendan Burford and Matt Madden among them.

Then there are a few "spiritual" images, like an exquisite colored pencil drawing by Lorenzo De Los Angeles that gives a plate of spaghetti and meatballs a Last Supper glow, though we move into iffy, jokey territory here.

We seem to be light years away from sublime in Anne Collier's "Real Life Experiences of Big Breasted Women" and Keith Boadwee's exhibitionistic "Breakfast in America." But are we? We're certainly far from museum-land, as Ms. Collier's indelicate photo-appropriation is unlikely ever to see the inside of MoMA, and even the liberal Whitney would balk at the Boadwee. Still, if their work is unacceptable to institutional taste, unacceptable defines an above-it-all sublime of its own.

Mr. Mayerson obviously understands this and with relish integrates the unacceptable into his new art movement. His exhibition concept is less a concept than a happenstance placing of this object next to that one, and these across from those. His main concern, you sense, was that there be room enough for everything, the “everything” brought together by his eye, his passion and his memory. This is a group show version of the all that is his art.

https://mobile.nytimes.com/2007/08/09/arts/design/09elle.html

The New York Times

April 14, 2006
By Roberta Smith

Art in Review

Jane Freilicher

Near the Sea: Paintings 1958-1963

Tibor de Nagy Gallery
724 Fifth Avenue, near 57th Street
Through April 22

This surprising show adds a piece to the unruly puzzle of late 1950's art — one not previously listed as missing. The 17 paintings and 6 drawings encapsulate a period of intense experimentation for Jane Freilicher, which began when she started to spend several months a year on the East End of Long Island. Transfixed by vistas of land and sea, she turned away from painting still lifes and cityscapes and approached landscape through abstraction. Paintings like "Small Harvest Moon," "Copper Sky," "Inlet" and "Winter Sun" were executed in oil on raw linen or canvas, sometimes from memory. Their soft masses of white and bleached-out color drift before the eye, suggesting a joyfully unmoored world engulfed in hand-painted sun spots. They may take cues from Hans Hoffman, with whom Ms. Freilicher had studied, as well as Helen Frankenthaler's stain paintings and Willem De Kooning's swashbuckling odes to the East End. Mainly, they suggest a more personal, grounded version of Color Field painting.

But the world could not be ignored, as indicated by the green fields, houses and potato barns that appear in some of the later works here. Ms. Freilicher's beautiful almost-abstractions indicate both a path not taken, and a new receptiveness to landscape, one of her main subjects ever since. The show also includes the sun-baked "Straw Hat," a rare and intense self-portrait from 1958 that states Ms. Freilicher's admiration for Bonnard with a determination very much her own.

ROBERTA SMITH

The New York Times

Seeing with Feeling: The Ordinary and the Wild

February 7, 2005
By Ken Johnson

ART REVIEW

Seeing With Feeling The Ordinary and Wild

293 & 297 TENTH AVENUE
515 WEST 27TH STREET NEW
YORK, NY 10001

TELEPHONE 212 563 4474
PAULKASMINGALLERY.COM

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

New York

December 19, 2005

New York

DECEMBER 19, 2005

THE CULTURAL ELITE 2005

THIS YEAR'S BEST

MOVIE NOVEL ARTIST

LYRIC SEX SCENE DIVA VILLAIN

A&R GUY EDITOR CURATOR DIRECTOR

ACTRESS LIVE BAND BROOKLYN NOVELIST CHELSEA GALLERIST PLAY

NEW BUILDING MUSICAL BOOK JACKET SINGLE FIRST SENTENCE

PAINTING ACTION SCENE BREAKTHROUGH THREE-LINER COMEBACK TRASH READ

ACADEMIC TOME COMEDY STUNT BLURB FEUD ENDING

AND ACTOR (VIGGO MORTENSEN)

WWW.NYMAG.COM

NEW YORK

DECEMBER 19, 2005

ART

In 2005, the bubble didn't burst, and the **Chelsea gallery scene** kept expanding—while heavies like **Matthew Marks** and **Damien Hirst** called attention to themselves (yet again). The Met reestablished its stellar reputation. **Digital art** took a small step forward. Oh, and someone put a bunch of **saffron fabric** in the park. BY MARK STEVENS

BEST ARTIST*
LEE FRIEDLANDER

*with a New York show this year

Friedlander has a New York eye. A wandering New York eye. He relishes the kaleidoscopic street, and he has a restless, expansive sensibility. His photographs don't seem to settle anything once and for all, but, instead, lead to ever more glimpses, insights, and perspectives. He's often on the move, roaming the country, taking pictures that capture the character of person and place. The retrospective of almost 50 years of his work at the Museum of Modern Art added up to an unforgettable portrait of twentieth-century America.

2 ELIZABETH MURRAY The painter's retrospective at MoMA celebrated the slangy energy of an art that seems forever impatient with museum walls.

3 JANE FREILICHER Freilicher's retrospective at the Tibor de Nagy gallery—mostly images of Water Mill and New York City—demonstrated that traditional painting can be as fresh as the seashore landscapes she often depicts.

293 & 297 TENTH AVENUE
515 WEST 27TH STREET NEW
YORK, NY 10001

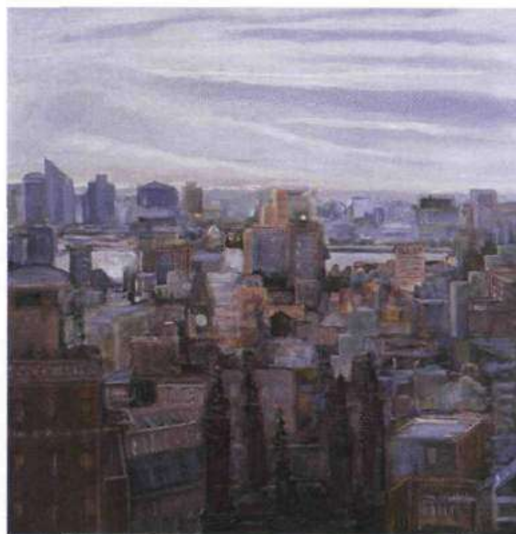
TELEPHONE 212 563 4474
PAULKASMINGALLERY.COM

Urban Meditations

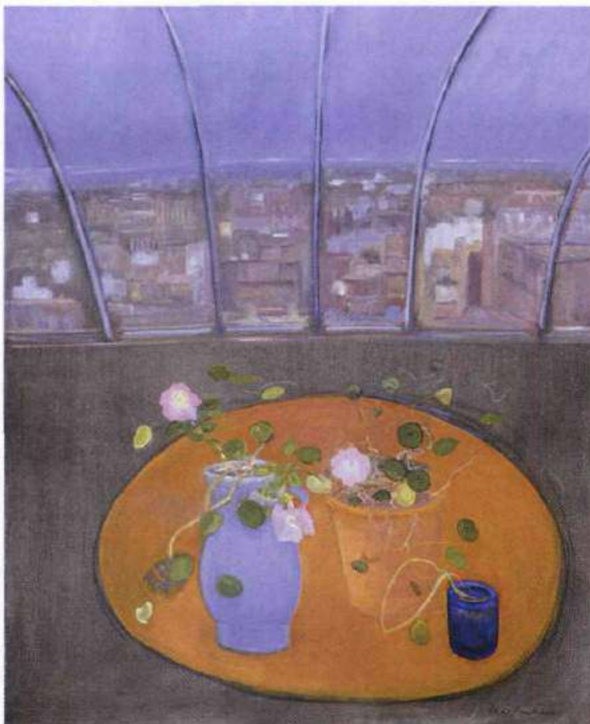
In her recent cityscapes and still lifes, painter Jane Freilicher displays a new liberty with the facts, making them the vehicle for reverie.

BY VINCENT KATZ

One senses a state of grace affecting the recent paintings of Jane Freilicher, a selection of which was recently on view at Tibor de Nagy Gallery in New York. This does not mean that their mood is unremittingly cheery. In fact, there is an overall equanimity to the paintings. Rather, it is the grace of knowing that she can do what she wants more easily now, that the desired effects, changeable though they may be, can be achieved through a harmony of eye, mind and hand. As usual, she works mainly with views from or settings in her two studios, one on lower Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, the other in Water Mill, Long Island. These vistas are chosen for their neutrality; despite their glamour and beauty, they do just happen to be there.



Jane Freilicher: South of Fourteenth Street, *2003, oil on linen, 25 inches square.*



Nasturtiums and Petunias I, *2003, oil on linen, 36 by 30 inches.*

This show included mainly urban scenes, with only two—an oceanscape and a view of a leafless tree against a winter field— identifiable as having country settings.

Freilicher did her first mature work in the 1950s, during the ascendancy of the New York School of painting. With contemporaries Nell Blaine, Larry Rivers and others, she fashioned a genre of representational painting based on Abstract-Expressionist techniques. Freilicher painted works then that had an abstractionist's emphasis on planar tension and a free approach to paint handling. Her painting *Burnett's Barn* (1963) is a good example of this style. The farm buildings are clearly recognizable, but the edges of vegetation are loosely delineated, and the paint asserts its nature in the way it takes to the canvas. Not coincidentally, Blaine, Freilicher and Rivers all studied with Hans Hofmann. In the 1960s, Freilicher distinguished her painting from that of her forebears by choosing mundane scenes, devoid of Abstract Expressionism's heroic angst, and rendering them in a way that relied more and more on detailed depiction.

Delicacy has always been a hallmark of Freilicher's technique, but where in many paintings in the 1970s and 1980s she devoted considerable energy to including specific information drawn from nature, in her recent work, she seems less encumbered by that preoccupation. These new images—whether they are landscapes, cityscapes, still lifes or flowers—do not trumpet their semantic referentiality. Rather than consciously submitting to the scene she is painting, Freilicher allows her imagination to dominate the scene. Her current manner, though, is tempered by decades of observation and application. The new paintings are open in a different way than are her 1950s paintings; they are not expressing but meditating, and it seems that what they are meditating on is natural rhythms (including those one finds in urban contexts). Through this controlled, one could say devotional, work, Freilicher creates small paintings packed with multiple ramifications.

In her new work, paint is allowed to stain into the canvas, forms allowed to blur into one another. Edges are softened, sometimes

indistinct. There is a hypnotic quality to these paintings that has an effect similar to that of Mondrian's studies of piers and shifting waters. Freilicher's emphasis, in this exhibition, on geometric forms drawn from buildings puts the paintings in a nonexpressionistic context.

One of the pleasures of Freilicher's work is its appropriate looseness. She knows just how much to bend a line or blend a tone so that the composition remains both a depiction and a satisfying complex of painted marks. This quality is present in the new work in stronger doses than has sometimes been the case. In a way, Freilicher is going back to some of her earliest painting roots. It is informative, for example, to compare *Early New York Evening* (1953-54) to *South of Fourteenth Street* (2003). The paint handling is similar, but the recent painting is more subtle tonally and more complicated in its composition. Its tone is set by a glow that is not the glow of the sun—the day is somber and overcast—nor yet the glow of filtered gray light, but the glow of the artist's pleasure in paint. The montage of building tops becomes like the sea, its gentle washing back and forth and in and out not the result of formal complexity, but rather an emanation from the surface itself, from the precision of almost evanescent areas of paint thinly laid on the canvas. The painting conveys an unusually real feeling of seeing, something mere depiction can never achieve.

The artist has been using staining for some time, both in her grounds and in the details of her pictures, and now it is the decisive element. She does not draw with charcoal, but starts right in with paint. As she explained recently, "I sometimes wipe in loosely brushed things; I might draw with pastel that I brush off." Where she used to use a Venetian red stain, now she might prepare a primed canvas with a raw sienna stain, or a dark green, or even black, which she then rubs out. "I find I don't like to start on a white canvas anymore," she says. "It seems somehow raw to me. Having that color bathes the painting in a certain way."

In *Mixed Flowers* (2003) the formal groundwork is not geometric, but comes from the natural shapes of leaves and flowers. The cropping removes from view any sense of table or other support for the vase, which is itself indicated only by a murky lavender area at the bottom of the work. The background is a generalized "room tone," perhaps indicating dusk or early evening. Surfaces are not slavishly evinced, but the colors feel precise and, along with the vegetal forms, make the flowers at once dreamlike and real. This realistic dreaminess can put one in mind of Odilon Redon's bouquets, nowhere more strongly than in the oil-on-paper *Flora I* (2003), whose blooms glow provocatively in a warm ground.

Nasturtiums and Petunias I (2003), a large work, is somewhat disconcerting. Three flowerpots rest on an ovoid surface, perhaps a ceramic tray or table top whose legs have vanished. Further complicating the scene, the even ground surrounding this support is indeterminately located in space. Is that gray-green ground a wall, or a floor, leading up to a series of curved spines for a skylight or canopy? We do know for certain that we see the city through these spines, but the rooftops, even more nebulous than those in *South of Fourteenth Street*, offer us little descriptive certainty. What is most emphatic is a sense of the flowers themselves, their colors and shapes. Even the

continued on page 191

Mallows and Trumpetvine, *2003, oil on linen, 40 by 32 inches. Images this article courtesy Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York.*

Hammersley

continued from page 151

al grid. But such logical permutations hardly explain the work's effect. What we *see* are two large shapes that jostle each other—the white jagged peak thrusts up and the aggressive black valley plunges down—even as each shape is invaded by a small triangle of the opposite color. Restricting himself to black and white demonstrates, in the artist's words, "the visual shock . . . combined with the surprise in getting pleasure from such limited means."[16]

For over 65 years, the self-directed Hammersley has turned "inward, into worlds of imagination," as William Blake put it. The paradox of Hammersley's intuitive MO is that nobody is more exacting. Indeed, the more subjective the process, the greater his display of rigor.[17] Thus Hammersley's palette knife shapes the hard edges of the "geometrics" without aid of masking tape, at once freehand and astonishingly precise. Leavening exactitude with spontaneity lends an element of surprise. Take, for instance, *Love Me, Love My Dog* (1972), selected by Hickey for "Beau Monde." A dark band runs horizontally across the canvas's middle third and rests on a square of the same color centered below, creating a giant T-shape. Given that the topmost band and the lower-right square of the canvas are painted in a homemade-mayonnaise hue and function as "ground," we might expect the lower left corner to follow suit. Instead, Hammersley paints the lower left square an acid egg-yolky color. This new hue is related chromatically but it's unexpected—and unerringly right. □

1. McLaughlin's work, reflecting his long stays in Japan, is meditative and uncluttered to the point of austerity, its palette restricted. Feitelson (who from 1956 to 1963 hosted a Sunday morning NBC television program broadcast from L.A. called "Feitelson on Art") reached what he called his hard-edge "magical space forms" via "post-surrealism"; thereafter straight lines gave way to organically inspired, sensuous curves. Benjamin began by painting symbolic landscapes, which turned into interlocking abstract forms—bars, grids, shapes suggestive of nature—in surprising, sometimes outlandish colors.
2. Jules Langsner, *Four Abstract Classicists*, exh. cat., San Francisco, Koltum Brothers, 1959, p. 8.
3. Not that he disappeared altogether. In the 1960s, Hammersley had solo shows at the La Jolla and Santa Barbara museums, in the 1970s at the University of New Mexico (he also won a Guggenheim Award in 1973), in the '80s at Cal State Northridge, and at the Mulvane in Topeka in the '90s. He appeared in group shows at the Corcoran and LACMA in 1977.
4. Claudine Humblet, *La Nouvelle Abstraction Américaine 1950-1970*, 3 vols., Paris, Skira, 2003, vol. 1, pp. 423-67.
5. Interviewed Jan. 15 and 16, 2003, for the UCLA Oral History Program, Department of Special Collections, Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. Hereafter cited as "Weschler interview."
6. Interview with the author, Nov. 7, 2003.
7. Weschler interview, p. 219.
8. Interview with the author, Oct. 9, 2003.
9. Interview with the author, Nov. 7, 2003.
10. Weschler interview, p. 75.
11. Ibid., p. 214.
12. Dave Hickey cited in *LA Weekly*, July 30, 2001, p. 32.
13. Interview with the author, Jan. 10, 2004.
14. Weschler interview, p. 196.
15. For Hammersley's views on many 20th-century American and European artists, see Weschler's interview, passim. For Hammersley's distinctiveness see Kathleen Shields, "Paintings from Left Field," *Art in America*, January 1991, pp. 124-27, 153.
16. Frederick Hammersley, *Poles a Part: An exhibit of black and white paintings March-April 1984*, Albuquerque, Hoshour Gallery, 1984, pp. 5-6.
17. In his 1959 catalogue essay, Langsner wrote, "An Abstract Classicist painting . . . represents a rational crystallization of intuitive experience." See Langsner, p. 9.

L.A. Louver Gallery in Venice, Calif., is currently showing an exhibition of Hammersley's paintings from the 1960s [Oct. 15-Nov. 13]. His work is also featured in "The Los Angeles School of Painting," curated by Dave Hickey, at the Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles [Nov. 13, 2004-Jan. 22, 2005]. The Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo has begun organizing a full-scale Hammersley retrospective.

Author: *Arden Reed is the Arthur and Fanny M. Dole Professor of English at Pomona College and the author of* Manet, Flaubert, and the Emergence of Modernism *(Cambridge University Press, 2003) and* Constance De Jong: Metal *(University of New Mexico Press, 2003).*

Freilicher

continued from page 157

flowers' supports are mysterious; the blossoms make an aleatory dance across the canvas, as their snaking stems are minimized.

In several paintings, broad areas of color serve formal and emotional purposes. There is an appealing sense that color weights typical of certain 1950s abstractions have been revalidated in a different time and context. In *Mallows and Trumpetvine* (2003), broad swaths of blue and at least five earthy tans compose a setting whose arbitrariness, signaled by the way the paint is allowed to transgress presumed color borders, in no way compromises the domestic feeling of the situation. Similarly, *Flowers on Blue* (2003) is centered by a bold horizontal streak, separating distant buildings from a nearby floral arrangement. The streak has the divisive effect of a river, and if we relax our consciousness, it can read as one, despite the fact that the buildings rise abruptly from it, and, more to the point, that this putative river breaks off at its bottom edge into brushwork that clearly asserts its nature as paint.

One of the paintings is appropriately titled *My Cubism* (2004), as several of these new city pieces are primarily two-dimensional "constructions" with different elements jostling each other for space. "The cityscapes are not slaves to nature," Freilicher affirms. "I'll start in a compulsive way. Sometimes, something far off will appeal to me. I put it in, then I realize it's too big to be that far away." In both the cityscapes and the flower paintings, an almost shocking liberty with facts is apparent. As the artist explains, "I find I will invent things: there will be an area of the painting that needs something, and I'll make up something."

Freilicher is known for the fixity of her settings, and for the paucity of human figures in them. She paints almost exclusively in her studios; even in the country she doesn't venture out in the open air as much as she once did. Part of this discipline is about seeing the same thing differently; part is about becoming sensitive to the differences small changes can make. Plants and landscape change from year to year, and there are other developments. "The space is curtailed by some other person's landscaping," as Freilicher diplomatically puts it. "That sets up a certain amount of variety I don't have to invent. But I find I can work within the constrictions. Sometimes it's a good thing." Even a nearby renovation, with its concomitant construction site, made it into a painting.

Nasturtiums in a Bowl (2003) is affecting for placing its flowers in a realistic light, and yet this plant seems to float out over the city, drawing the viewer with it. Even in this clear daylit work, a sense of reverie persists, intimating not only French ideas in poetry and music, but also the reverie of an older person, looking at the world, remembering childhood and dreaming again.

In the seasoned experience of certain artists, one can observe a progression from youth—in which the facts of the artist's esthetic may need to be determined with precision, hard lines and definition—to a maturity that allows the artist ever greater freedom in drawing and touch. It is not necessarily a move toward abstraction, or not only that. It is also a rediscovery of a long-lost state of grace, a carefreeness, perhaps.

John Ashbery once called a Freilicher landscape "Baudelairean," and Kenneth Koch was bowled over by her spontaneous recitation of Baudelaire's poems, but Freilicher's work also makes me think of Mallarmé. It is as if the rhythms and tones, as in Mallarmé's poems, are more important than the variety of earthly existence. □

"Jane Freilicher: Recent Work" appeared at Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York [Mar. 18-Apr. 24].

Author: *Vincent Katz is a New York-based poet and critic.*

THE NEW YORKER

CHEZ JANE

Two shows celebrate a painter of sly pleasures.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

The poet John Ashbery once remarked, "From the moment that life cannot be one continual orgasm, real happiness is impossible and pleasant surprise is promoted to the front rank of the emotions." He might have been talking about the art of Jane Freilicher, who has been a good friend of his for half a century. Sensual ardor damped down by ironic resignation is something that Freilicher's paintings share with Ashbery's poetry. Both induce an urbane and intelligent pleasure, of a sort that I associate with T. S. Eliot's often quoted comment about Henry James: "He had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it." Ashbery, of course, is a much acclaimed literary figure, famous for the soaring abstraction and pitch-perfect vernacular of poems whose meaning is anyone's guess. Freilicher, whose landscapes and cityscapes haven't been in fashion for even a moment of her long career, has a narrower expressive range, and she works in a medium in which there is no obligation to make paraphrasable sense. Still, she is a wonderful, absurdly underrated painter.

Two shows at the National Academy of Design make the best possible case for Freilicher's subtle gifts—and, incidentally, for the academy itself, a sleepy and genteel but delectable institution that was founded, in 1825, to "promote the fine arts in America." Artists who have been entitled to append "N.A." to their names range from Thomas Cole to Robert Rauschenberg, but most have been less well known and, before a recent liberalizing trend, distinctly conservative. The academy's quarters, in a mansion near the Guggenheim Museum, retain a musty air of risk-averse old money. In this context, Freilicher's lively eye and sly wit shine. One of the current shows is a mini-retrospective of her cityscapes, which she paints looking out of her eighteenth-floor penthouse on lower Fifth Avenue. The other is the latest exhibition in a series called "The Artist's Eye," of works chosen from the academy's large permanent collection by member artists. Freilicher's selection includes a few big names, such as Thomas Eakins and John Singer Sargent, but it favors the unexpected and the offbeat. The show is an object lesson in the quickening effects of enthusiastic discernment. It teases slow delights from paintings that might otherwise command only a passing glance.

Freilicher was born Jane Niederhoffer in Brooklyn in 1924. Her mother was an amateur pianist who, as a teen-ager, played in silent-movie theatres. Her father was an Eastern European immigrant who worked in the Brooklyn courts as a translator of Spanish and Yiddish. In 1942, Jane married Jack Freilicher, a jazz pianist whose band, after the war, employed a young saxophonist named Larry Rivers. Rivers—whose death, on August 14th, extinguished one of contemporary art's most vivid personalities—became her lover and, inspired by her example, an artist. She studied with Hans Hofmann, and became fast friends and a sometime collaborator with the quartet of poets known as the New York School: Ashbery, Frank O'Hara, Kenneth Koch, and James Schuyler. In 1952, she had her first solo show, at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery. That year, she took up with Joseph Hazan, a dancer, painter, and businessman. She married Hazan in 1957 and began dividing her time between the city and a house in Water Mill, on Long Island, whose big-windowed studio and surrounding meadows and dunes continue to be constant subjects of her paintings.

Freilicher's literary circle gave her a close but detached angle on the excitements of Abstract Expressionism. So did the heterodox example of Fairfield Porter, the brilliant painter and critic who, while revering Willem de Kooning, argued that modern art had gone wrong in following Paul Cézanne instead of Édouard Vuillard. Porter's color-based, brushy realism, in pictures of tranquil nature and of

bohemian-bourgeois, summer-house domesticity, continues to look better and better. (He died in 1975.) His sternly principled but warm, civilized aestheticism complements rather than contests the noisier advances of American art in his era. Although Freilicher was already set on a stubbornly independent course as a realist in a world dominated by abstract art, she drew strength from Porter. Many other low-profile, mostly New York landscape and figurative painters, did, too, but she seems to me his worthiest peer.

Freilicher's style is remarkable for its rejection of anything cerebral. She values color and tone, over line and shape, as primary sensations of the eye. For example, she strives to render effects of sun and shade on the chilly white façade of the Con Edison tower on East Fourteenth Street; she comes to no conclusion about the building's geometry, even though she has been painting it for years. If Freilicher's drawing seems a bit woozy and even amateurish, it's because she has no faith in drawing's capacity to register sensuous experience. She prefers making honest attempts to describe with immediacy the most indescribable of visual phenomena, such as the colors of shadows amid a jumble of buildings in the shifting light of a hazy late afternoon. Often, she includes in the foreground a steadily lit vase of flowers, whose colors and textures are elusive in their own way.

No painter depicts more economically the desultory scraggle of incident and color that appears in any patch of meadow when you admit your eye's helplessness in sorting it out. A couple of greens stroked into a yellow may say it all. Her work rewards long and repeated looks. (Relax on the circular sofa in the fussy, wood-panelled room of the academy where her cityscapes are hung.) Freilicher's paintings gradually summon fugitive emotions that are beyond words. Foremost for me is a slightly melancholy but secretly smiling spirit of acceptance, conveyed with a casual formality that honors painting's trusty conventions. I am reminded of the title of an O'Hara poem: "In Memory of My Feelings."

Freilicher's choices for her "Artist's Eye" show suggest memories of other people's feelings. Delicate formal contrasts and rhymes and sweet jokes abound in groupings of portraits, self-portraits, landscapes, still-lifes, and nudes. So-so paintings by Junius Allen, Herman Rose, and Jules Guerin—of buildings in New York, Haifa, and Siena—make different uses of warm or cool pastel hues; seen together, they sound an amazing chord. The naked pretty boy in Thomas Dewing's arch-academic "The Sorcerer's Slave" (1877) and the naked pretty girl in Elihu Vedder's "Samson and Delilah" (undated) seem to be comparing notes on the fun of polite prurience. The Icelandic painter Louisa Matthiasdottir's vigorous portrait of herself in overalls seems exasperated to be in the company of so many elegant gentlemen portrayed elegantly by gentlemen artists. Two of these, from the early twentieth century, flank an outrageous self-portrait by Paul Georges, the estimable Romantic realist, who died earlier this year. Pictured in a maroon sweater against a brick-red ground, Georges is a pouty, small-headed man-mountain, daintily holding a little brush in an immense, paw-like hand. ("Suavity to slobbery," Freilicher said to me with evident satisfaction about the evolution in New York male-artist chic.)

Freilicher's wit recalls that of Kenneth Koch, another old friend who died recently. Koch, who, among other things, was a writer of hilarious parodies, said that you can't successfully parody anything you don't like. By placing the Georges next to a 1902 portrait, by one William Thomas Smedley, of the architect Thomas Hastings, debonair in pince-nez, Freilicher achieves a comic effect that vivifies the mannerly panache of an all but forgotten painter. (Old Smedley was a dab hand.) She turns the high-sounding National Academy of Design, a benignly fascinating bastion of snobbery overthrown, into what Lorenz Hart called Manhattan for people in love—a wondrous toy. ♦

In "Afternoon in the City" (2001), Jane Freilicher summons emotions beyond words.

COURTESY TIBOR DE NAGY GALLERY, NEW YORK

The New York Times

June 28, 2002
By Roberta Smith

The New York Times

ART REVIEW

When a Painter Plays Curator, a Distinctive Vision

By ROBERTA SMITH

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2002

When a museum gives an artist the run of its collection to select an exhibition, the results are almost always interesting. Why? Because of that ineffable factor called "the artist's eye." Artists look at other people's art more intensely and from more angles than the average art-loving citizen. They are implicitly demanding, even selfish, and ever alert to everything from historical validation and inspiration to technical cues and simple companionship — and it shows. More often than not, they mount shows that reveal their own sensibilities and thought processes in unintended ways.

"The Artist's Eye: Jane Freilicher as Curator," the sixth in a series of artist-selected shows at the National Academy of Design Museum, is no exception. Ms. Freilicher has been known since the early 1950's for reserved but opulently colored still lifes and landscapes. In the accompanying brochure, she writes that she sifted through the academy's vast collection with no particular theme in mind, and was drawn to her choices by "some quality of vitality or mystery, of competent execution, of tender emotion, or just irresistible charm." Ranging in date from the mid-19th century to the late 20th, and including landscapes, still lifes and portraits, they form a compelling, if conservative, meditation on painting technique, subject matter and the academy's history.

In the brochure, Ms. Freilicher makes no bones about the pejorative connotations of the word academic and notes the absence of the "leading lights of the postwar decades" from the academy's roster. Yet, to some extent, she has spent her career bridging the shrinking gap between the academic and the avant-garde in a way that is both ambivalent and subtly nuanced, and her show has a similar mood. It also reflects a consuming interest in touch, which seems fitting for an artist whose work is alternately graced and worried by a distinct, slightly awkward style of brushwork. Thirteen of her own paintings — delicately toned views of New York City, often at dusk — are on view in a side gallery.

The first gallery of the show is a kind of mishmash or warm-up that provides a sense of the narrow yet open-ended parameters of the academy's collection: it is steeped in a particular tradition and yet is constantly reshaped by the work of new members. A robust if Cézannesque 1982 painting of a tree by Ruth Miller hangs next to Thomas Moran's lucid 1884 "Three Mile Harbor"; a truculent abstracted nude by Charles Cajori (1987) is adjacent to a lush 1892 self-portrait by John Singer Sargent.

A selection both ambivalent and subtly nuanced.

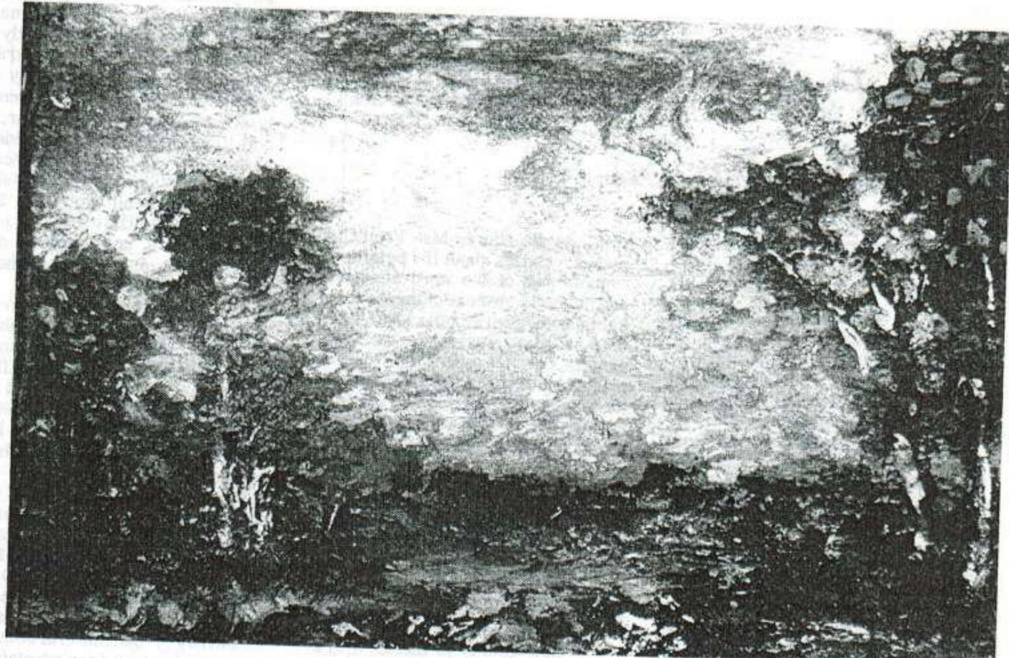
The works are attached to names famous, forgotten or recently retrieved: Thomas Eakins's portrait of Edward W. Redfield, a slightly rawboned man who doesn't seem entirely at ease in a starched collar; Abbott Handerson Thayer's confidently dashed-off "Winter Landscape" (1902); and "Samson and Delilah," a small undated oil study by Elihu Vedder (1836-1923) that is juxtaposed with a considerably drier, more chaste male nude by Thomas Dewing (1851-1938).

Nearby, the argument in favor of smallness continues with Ralph Blakelock's index-card-size "Sunset," from 1916, which centers on a flurry of red and yellow strokes, and R. B. Kitaj's tiny "Passion (1940-45), Coastline," from 1985, a fiery fairytale drama reminiscent of Chagall and early Kandinsky.

Sometimes the point seems to be that almost any painting contains at least one convincing passage. Although thoroughly indebted to Dutch landscape painting, Aaron Draper Shattuck's "Ford" brims with such moments, all rendered with a superb sensitivity to light, natural detail and distance. Its tree-dappled plain and far-off mountains may sensitize you to a similiarly exquisite vista tucked in a corner of Maxfield Parrish's otherwise sappy "Saint Valentine," which hangs nearby.

It is in the show's second, larger gallery that Ms. Freilicher gets going. She lines one wall with portraits and self-portraits, anchored by Paul Georges's large red-on-red rendering of his own mountainous form. Just moving down this wall, studying the sitters' eyes, is an interesting experience. You can also compare the different effects of Sargent's influence on John Christian Johansen's fluid portrait of Jonas Lie, with its quiet flutter of emotion, and on Charles Webster Hawthorne's rendering of the architect Thomas Hastings, an altogether tighter, smugger image.

On another wall, two late-20th-century works — Louisa Matthiasdottir's "Self-Portrait in Overalls" and



National Academy of Design Museum

"Sunset," a 1916 work by Ralph Blakelock, is part of "The Artist's Eye: Jane Freilicher as Curator."

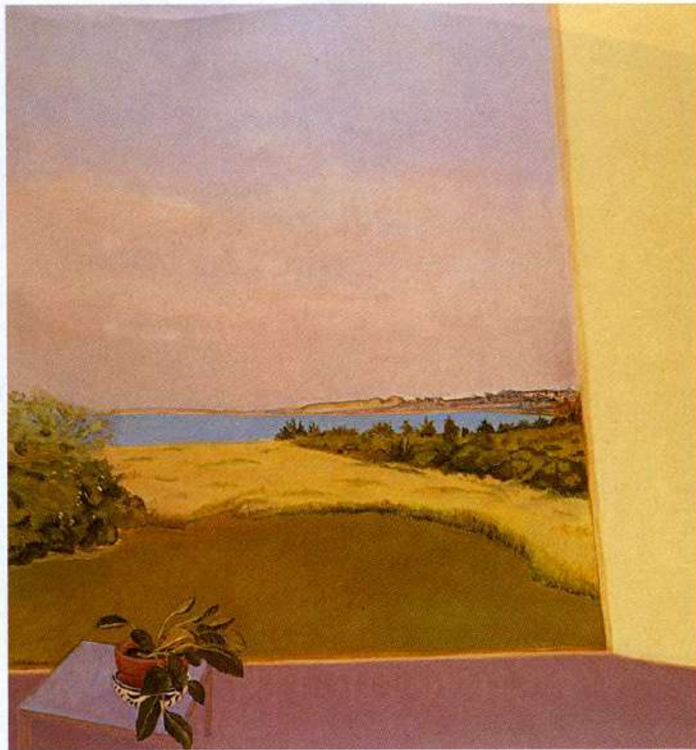
Lois Dodd's "Torn Barn" —present contrasting kinds of full frontal implacability, one defined by stance, another by architecture. Nearby, Andrew Forge's "Roman Torso," a shaft of stippled yellow against stippled orange, is paired with Charles Sydney Hopkinson's portrait of his daughter, a between-the-wars work that has an identical palette and a similar sense of stillness. And farther along, you can compare the progressiveness of two works that would have made any academy proud: Emil Carlson's 1902 "Wild Swan," which might almost have been painted during Chardin's lifetime, and "La Gigia," a full-length portrait that Charles Webster Hawthorne (1872-1930) painted at roughly the same time. Depicting a hunched old female servant standing near a table with a decanter and a glass in her hands, it is so in love with Zurburan's shadowy gravity and patient saints that its charms are, indeed, irresistible.

"The Artist's Eye: Jane Freilicher as Curator" is at the National Academy of Design Museum, 1083 Fifth Avenue, at 89th Street, (212) 369-4880, through Sept. 22.

painting nature

Jane Freilicher has always done it **her way.** How she painted, what she painted, why she painted, even *that* she painted—everything she did went against the grain. And now, after nearly half a century, her paintings—**luminous,** gorgeous—cast their spells. And she knows she was right all along.

by FRANCINE PROSE



This is the first of four articles on Women in the Arts, which will run in "Victoria" throughout the coming year. In the series, novelist Francine Prose will focus on four working artists who have made important contributions to their fields. She will look at when and how they decided to become artists, at their goals, their styles of working, and at the struggles and satisfaction they have found along the way as they have dedicated themselves to making our world a richer and more beautiful place.

JANE FREILICHER IS PAINTING THE OCEAN. ON an easel, in her glass-enclosed studio high above the streets of Greenwich Village, is a small canvas on which she has deftly and perfectly rendered the gentle rolling of the waves, the lacy, frothy scallops that are formed when the water breaks against the sandy shore. As in all her paintings, the light and the weather are captured so precisely that it's almost startling. You know you've seen a day just like that, and the sense of familiarity evokes a memory just beyond your grasp. The sky above the water is luminous and pearlescent, and its colors make me think of one of Chekhov's most beautiful descriptions, of a seascape: "The sky turns a soft lilac. Looking at this gorgeous enchanted sky, at first the ocean scowls, but soon it takes tender, joyous, passionate colors for which it is hard to find a name in human speech."

But Jane Freilicher has her doubts about the new painting—partly because the seascape represents a departure for her. During the course of her career, which has spanned nearly half a century, her painting has stayed firmly focused on land. Her best-known work has concentrated on the views from her windows: the lush, overgrown fields and the strip of water that she can see from her studio in Water Mill, on eastern Long Island, and the vertiginous panorama of rooftops, visible now, on a blindingly bright January afternoon, from her duplex apartment in New York. Indeed, on a table in the studio is a painting, done several decades ago, of the view from the window—and my eye keeps tracking back and forth from the painting to the scene outside and back again to the image that both mirrors and transforms the reality beyond the glass.

THROUGHOUT Freilicher's career, landscapes and flowers have been favorite subjects. Above: "View Over Mecox (Yellow Wall)." Opposite: "Summer Flowers, Urban Dusk."

The recipient of numerous honors and awards, Freilicher has paintings in dozens of major museum collections (including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) and institutions all over the country. Her work has been shown steadily since the 1950's, and the single most remarkable thing about it is the quiet steadiness of her vision. Though her style has evolved over the decades, her subject matter has remained consistent: still lifes, landscapes and remarkable paintings of flowers, which can persuade you that you are seeing flowers for the first time and in an entirely new way.

Normally, Freilicher paints from life. But now, in the dead of winter, she's doing the autumnal seascape from photographs—another experiment. "Using photographs gives me more control," she says. "But the sea is hard to paint. There's

everything and be everything for her—I never had to take her everywhere and provide her with every conceivable lesson, the way so many parents do today.

"When she was little, Elizabeth never wanted to be an artist. In fact, we used to have to drag her to museums. But then she got out of college and decided she wanted to paint. Of course, it's worrisome, because I know what a hard life it is. But I like the connection."

If she believes that being a painter represents a commitment to leading "a hard life," little of that comes through in Freilicher's calm, reflective, gently ironic manner, nor does struggle seem to have left its mark on her appearance. In her mid-seventies, she looks decades younger and still retains the grace, the easy charm and the flashes of the dry, mordant humor that fueled her reputation as one of the wittiest members of the artistic circles she hung out with in the 1950's and 60's.

Afternoon sunlight streams onto the long dining room table at which we sit, surrounded by several of Freilicher's paintings. One particularly beautiful canvas, the 1955 *Still Life With Calendulas*, depicts a pitcher of flowers set in front of a draped curtain of fabric in a pattern, which, I suddenly realize, is like the Indian bedspread I had in my room in college.

Speaking in a quiet voice punctuated by bursts of laughter at her own youthful follies, Jane Freilicher recalls the beginnings of her life in art and her childhood in Brooklyn, where she was born in 1924. A "high achiever" in high school, she didn't begin to consider the possibility of becoming an artist until her brother started bringing home art reproductions—some of Picasso's paintings and the Matisse "jazz" cut-outs—printed in *Verve* magazine.

nothing to focus on. There's no beginning and no ending."

For reassurance, she's been looking through a volume of works by Courbet, the nineteenth-century French master who is one of her favorite painters. "Courbet did some awful seascapes. And I thought it would give me more courage if I looked at these really corny works done by a truly great painter." But the Courbet paintings she shows me are lovely—as is Freilicher's moody study of the Atlantic shore. And I understand that the process—of seeing, painting, doubting, revising, rethinking, reworking—is the way that she (like so many women artists) has found the inspiration, the energy, the nerve and the resilience to keep on producing art, to keep on keeping on.

Jane Freilicher's Manhattan apartment has the comfortable, unselfconscious, unfussed-over air of a place that's been lived in—fully inhabited—for years. In fact, she's lived here since the early 1960's with her husband, the painter Joe Hazan; it's where they raised their daughter, Elizabeth, now thirty-six, who has two children of her own and is also a painter. In the entrance hall is one of her daughter's works: a small, elegant still life, which Freilicher points out with pride and just a hint of astonishment.

Contrary to the popular myth, Freilicher never found motherhood incompatible with an art career. "I had my daughter later than normal [she was forty-one], and I could afford a little help by then. And even though my daughter was the most important thing, I never felt that I had to do

After graduating as class valedictorian, she eloped with a soldier, who was also a musician and a composer, and continued her education at Brooklyn College. Five years later the marriage was over. "I was pretty much on my own, doing various jobs. Somehow I struggled through the lean years. It was fun—and a terrible hardship at the same time."

It was during this period that she met the group of artists and writers whose influence inspired and sustained her—poets such as Frank O'Hara and John Ashbery; painters including Larry Rivers and Nell Blaine, a "free spirit" and "pioneer in loft living," who encouraged Freilicher to become an artist and leave Brooklyn for Manhattan. There she found an apartment in the same sketchy, inexpensive Third Avenue building as the poet Kenneth Koch, who used to amuse himself by putting on a gorilla mask and startling passengers on the Third Avenue el as it roared past his window.

She got an MA from Columbia, "in case I ever needed to teach." But her real education came from the studio classes she attended, taught by the painter and legendary teacher Hans Hofmann. "Most of the other students had much more

Until you've looked at "Mallows," you've never imagined a plant could simultaneously be so airy and self-assertive.

background in painting than I had," recalls Freilicher, "and it was scary. But it was serious. It felt like the real thing. Also, there was a very generous spirit there. You could paint whatever you wanted. Hofmann stressed that art was one continuous chain from the Old Masters to the present."

The 1950's were the heyday of Abstract Expressionism, dominated by such art stars as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning. But though she experimented with abstraction, Freilicher kept including figurative and realistic elements in her work. "I wanted to come back to the object–and the place." What heartened and inspired her, around this same time, were two major museum retrospectives showing the work of French Intimist painters Pierre Bonnard and Edouard Vuillard. "With Bonnard, what impressed me was the accessibility. You could get into those paintings–they absorbed you in a certain way. And Vuillard had the ability to make something out of ordinary stuff. The wallpaper, the lamplight. He had a magic way of infusing his canvas with atmosphere."

Of course, Freilicher has just described what's most striking about her own work–the atmosphere, the accessibility, the ability to make something out of the objects and scenes immediately around her. Since those early years, the process of beginning a painting has remained more or less constant. "I think about what I can paint. And I'll see something with a certain combination of colors. It's like a little light goes on. Well, I think, I could sort of orchestrate this bowl of flowers, move it around in some way and make something come out."

Captured by Freilicher's deft brushstroke, flowers seem to have individual and mysterious personalities. Until you've looked at her 1997 *Mallows*, you've never imagined that the color pink could be so forceful, or that any plant could simultaneously be so airy and self-assertive. "I've always loved flowers. When I was a child my parents used to give me little bouquets. I liked to contemplate them, wonder about them."

"Field of Gold II" captures "the impossible loveliness" of an unbroken field of goldenrod bathed in sunlight, "without seeming corny or grandiose."

In the last few years, Freilicher has begun painting cleomes–huge, odd-smelling, thorny and spectacular. "A friend likes to bring me a bouquet from the local growers, and she always gets something I wouldn't have thought of. The cleomes just have this presence, like a wild head of hair. Like Courbet's paintings of those girls with the wild red hair."

And then there are the landscapes and cityscapes, most often glimpsed through the window. Like all realist paintings, Freilicher's can't help documenting and referring to the passage of time. In her studies of Long Island, you can trace the gradual incursion of civilization as the land around her studio was developed. In one of her best-known, if not exactly characteristic works, the 1981 *Changing Scene*, a woman who looks much like Freilicher (and holds three paintbrushes clutched in her hand) stands beside a curtain, near a window through which we can see an earthmover tearing up the ground. And one of the paintings on her living room wall depicts a view of the landmark Con Edison clock tower, which can no longer be seen from her New York studio, thanks to the construction of a high-rise apartment building. "I still keep looking in that direction to see what time it is," says Freilicher, ruefully.

At moments Freilicher has felt slighted by the prejudice against work as reserved as hers, and by the general consensus that paintings of landscapes and especially of flowers are somehow not as serious and important as the work that other (mostly male) artists in her generation were doing. "There is a tendency to feel that gritty, tough painting is more valuable and authentic, if just because of its sheer power. People will say, 'Oh, flower paintings. Why doesn't she do something hard?' Sometimes when I have a show, some man–another painter–will pick out a really tiny painting and say, 'Oh, I like that one.' And I know he just didn't get the whole thing."

Though the art world is a notoriously tough place for women–in general, work by women is harder and less prof-

itable to sell than men's—Freilicher feels that being a female may have had benefits as well as drawbacks. "We weren't expected to get out there and brazen it out. I felt that there were low expectations for women, which in a funny way gave me a kind of freedom. If I didn't completely screw up, I was doing more than was expected of me. There wasn't that huge pressure of being terribly famous and successful."

In fact, Freilicher is famous and successful—and highly valued by a younger generation of artists. Catherine Murphy, whose paintings were shown in the Whitney Museum of American Art's 1995 Biennial, says, "She reaches for a kind of sublimity that I find in artists like Dufy. I've gone to probably every one of her shows since 1967, and my admiration for her increases. What I like about her work is a kind of freedom; she has a lightness of touch without being facile."

Despite her renown, Freilicher's career and life have followed an almost old-fashioned model of how the artist should live and behave compared to the generations that came after her, especially in the 1980's and 90's, when artists seemed to spend more time in expensive restaurants and fashionable resorts than in their studios. Talking to Jane Freilicher, you feel that what's most important is the work itself, and the love of beauty and of art that gets you into your studio day after day. "There's a certain kind of hunger for doing it that keeps one looking. It's almost the physical sensation that I enjoy." And even as she offers up those details of her life that might illuminate her work, she makes it clear that her biography is unimportant compared to whatever is communicated by her work. She often quotes Balthus, who said, "I am a painter about whom nothing is known."

And so I decide to spend part of the morning alone with her new paintings at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery on Fifth Avenue, in Manhattan, where she has exhibited her work since the 1950's. At the time of my visit, one of her canvases is included in a group show that traces the gallery's history over the past half century. But the directors arrange to display a half-dozen of her works in a small room near the reception area.

As soon as the door shuts behind me, I feel Freilicher's canvases work their magic on me—a spell concocted of the light, the landscape and the weather. Several of the paintings depict a field of goldenrod outside her Water Mill studio. Somehow Freilicher captures the richness and the impossible loveliness of the furry yellow flowers thickly covering the field without seeming corny or grandiose. The landscapes are at once spontaneous, understated, offhand and totally gorgeous. Part Van Gogh, part pure nature. They are infused with deep feeling, and yet the feeling never overwhelms you, or calls attention to itself or seems coercive.

As for the future. "I feel very lucky to be a part of the whole tradition of art, which keeps reminding us of what it is to be a human being," Jane Freilicher explains. "That human connection reassures you. You think: this has been going on for a very long time, and hopefully it will continue."

Tibor de Nagy Gallery, 724 Fifth Avenue, NYC; (212) 262-5050.

The New York Times
NEW YORK, FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 1995
$1 beyond the greater New York metropolitan
Copyright © 1995 The New York Times

Art in Review

Jane Freilicher

Fischbach Gallery
24 West 57th Street
Manhattan
Through April 1

Art and life blend in Jane Freilicher's lovely show of recent paintings, which include motifs she first used 40 years ago: luminous still lifes and Watteau's commedia dell'arte character Mezzetin, dressed in ash gray and antique rose and singing of unrequited love.

Ms. Freilicher, who is 70, paints this elegant, solitary figure in several ways. He appears as a careful but brushy transcription of Watteau's original, then as a full-page reproduction in an open book, and finally as a self-absorbed real-life visitor sitting and strumming his lute in a grove of trees below her Long Island studio window.

He looks no more incongruous against the distant saltwater marshes than does the exotic African parrot perched on the artist's terrace (the bird and the musician also appear in a painting by Ms. Freilicher that is in this year's Whitney Biennial). In both cases, dreamlike pastiche is rendered in a sometimes awkward, plain style that keeps it firmly rooted in the here and now.

Ms. Freilicher's bouquets are often similarly forthright: drooping pink cosmos in a white milk pitcher look as fresh and tart as they probably smelled. But they can also be apparitional and poetic. The image of a Redonesque cloud of cut summer flowers, glowing with inner light and floating against the velvety purple of the Manhattan skyline at night, is as sweet and sad and gallant as a love song, scintillating in the memory. *HOLLAND COTTER*

The portrait of Arnold Weinstein finished; it is 82 inches high and will be included in Miss Freilicher's fifth one-man show at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery in October. Above left is Ingres's *Mme. Rivière* which was in back of the artist's mind when starting to paint, but only as a precedent.

By Fairfield Porter

Photographs by Rudolph Burckhardt

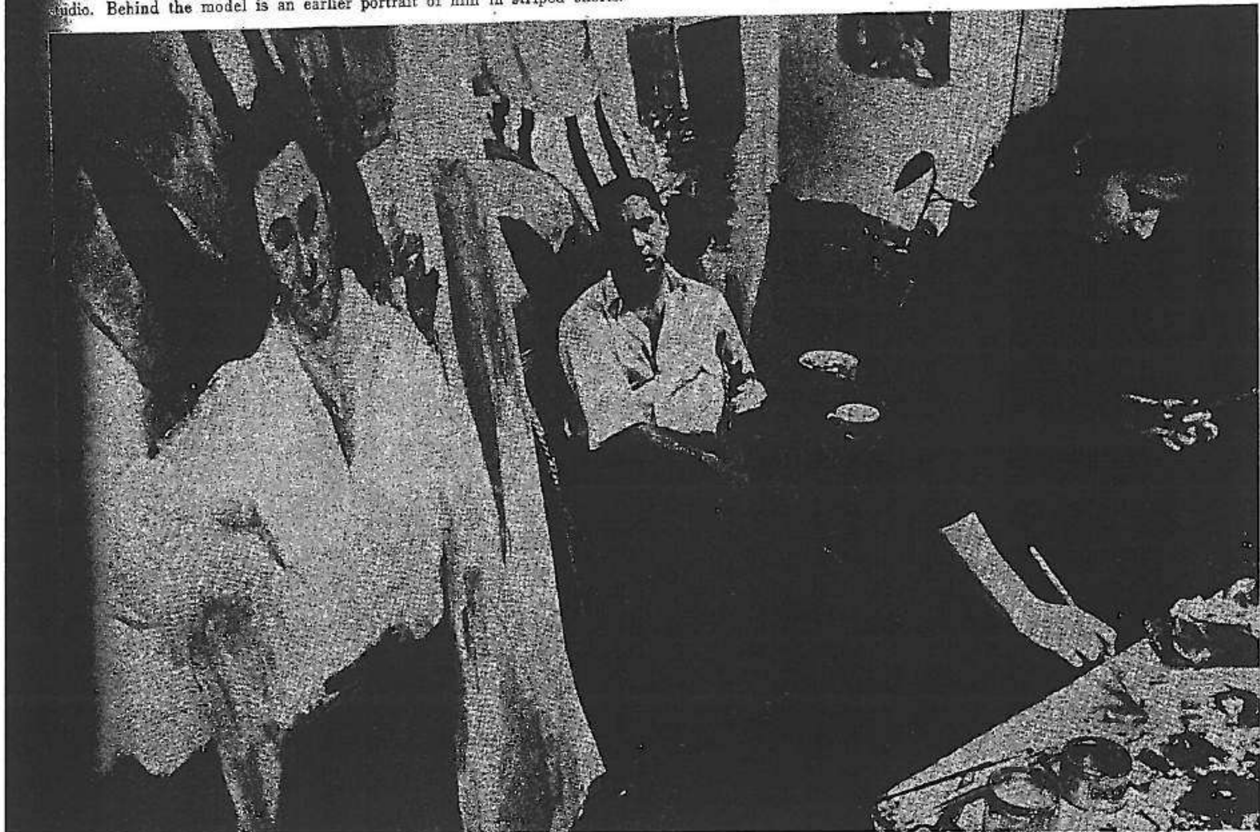
Jane Freilicher

Jane Freilicher was born in Brooklyn thirty-one years ago and has lived in New York all her life except for two brief trips to Mexico, a year and a half at West Point during the war, and a summer at the Hans Hofmann School in Provincetown. She has an M.A. in art education from Columbia, where she studied with Meyer Schapiro, and she has been an art teacher, a waitress, a receptionist and a stenographer.

When the portrait of Arnold Weinstein, reproduced in these pages, was finished, Jane Freilicher said of the process: "I can't think consciously at the beginning about organizing a painting. Sometimes I plunge into a picture and it seems impossible that any organization will result, but if you don't start with a preconceived arrangement you get a fresher view of things." She is occupied with the question of "realism" and "abstraction." "It seems to me that 'realism' affords more opportunities for unique organization. Too many paintings with the 'modern look' have compositions arranged like electro-cardiograms with linear radiations, vertical or horizontal, in the middle middle of the canvas; or vignettes or volumes in the middle of the picture that don't go to the edges or in some cases are suspended to the edges by a web. Some of these pictures are very good, but many seem academic. They have the same substance all over, as if the paint were applied in the same quantities and textures all over—beautiful paintings, too—but why, when everything else in modern life is so complicated and ambiguous, is this effect of complete unification especially modern? There seems to be a great appreciation for works that eliminate more and more elements and concentrate on a very few, both in painting methods and psychological content." When someone praised a puppet show to Henry James with the phrase "economy of means," he replied, "economy of means: economy of effect." Jane Freilicher said, "When a painting suggests, it seems to be thought to have greater virtue than when it states clearly. Why can't you be just as suggestive when you present fully—for very often the more you see, the more you can imagine?"

In realism the imagery is major and puts a mark on consciousness, and not only in realism, for the meaning of the statement that "Klee is a painter of the third rank but an artist of the first" is that what he counts for is the originality of his imagery, and for Jane Freilicher, Gauguin is another such artist, who created a world because of his interest in his subject. He stands out for the appeal of his imagery—and one of the hazards of having a conscious imagery, or of using a subject, is that sometimes one will forego the felicities of painting in the interest of a projection of an image in psychological terms. Here there is a conflict to be resolved, and great painters are able to get both a projection of an image and felicitous painting.

The artist, the model and the half-finished painting crowd into the small studio. Behind the model is an earlier portrait of him in striped shorts.



She thinks of the phrase, "ripeness is all." What does it mean, that a kind of fullness is the goal? In her painting, she moved between relaxation before the subject and a consideration of the painting as a painting—the first when the model was posing, the other when he was not there, especially when the painting began to be finished. Her choice of realism is doubtless one of a number of subconscious choices, meaning finally that one cannot choose. "I would like to paint in a hundred different ways if I could, but—it comes out one way."

This belief of hers is related to something that she sees and admires in Courbet. (She herself looks a bit like one of Courbet's models.) "What attracts me to him is that all his paintings seem to have all sorts of contradictions and impossibilities. His composition is sometimes awkward. A whole picture might be overblown or might be in a crazy scale—sometimes there is a kind of stiffness and heaviness in his paintings, but the fact that the passion from which he was painting comes through is so moving that it carries all before it. Sometimes I enjoy Courbet more than any other painter, and though I may not think the picture is really right it moves me very much. His figures are larger than life and almost more vivid. Sometimes if one looks at one's face very close in the mirror, there is this vividness, and even if the drawing it 'out'—an arm a mile away from the body—it is thrilling to see something so alive and so big. He communicates a great excitement about things. In realistic painting it is hard to convey a feeling of intoxication. Who else has done it? Titian? Rembrandt? Some Impressionists? When this feeling is conveyed, the subject has usually faded to an abstract rendering of sensation. If the essence of good painting is vitality, then, in painting nature, one should try to get nature's vitality. For someone supposed to be so passionate and crazy, van Gogh painted in a very orderly fashion. He seemed to superimpose a conscious order that gets in the way. Courbet seems not to order consciously." In the previous summer, on Long Island, she had painted Arnold Weinstein, a young poet and English instructor, in striped shorts, and he was posed for this winter picture in front of the other one. In her small lower East Side studio everything is close. The canvas was so large that it cut out most of the daylight. Stretched, it measured 82 by 58¼ inches. She paints with the canvas flat against a piece of homasite so that the pressure of erasing will not dent it.

There was not much adjustment of the model's position, and after shuffling and consideration the first smear of pink was rubbed on with a rag dipped in turpentine. "I consider the composition at the beginning and then forget it for awhile. It is important where you start the figure. I want to place it low on the canvas with a big space overhead—but maybe in the next picture . . . I wanted the whole figure included, though the space above the head is more valuable. I could compromise by reducing the scale." The beginning is not irrevocable because the first thin rubbings are easily taken off with turpentine.

In the first rest, she said, "The first thing that ever happened to me in the 'art line' was that I used to draw faces in my notebook and my father thought they looked tragic and carried them around in his wallet."

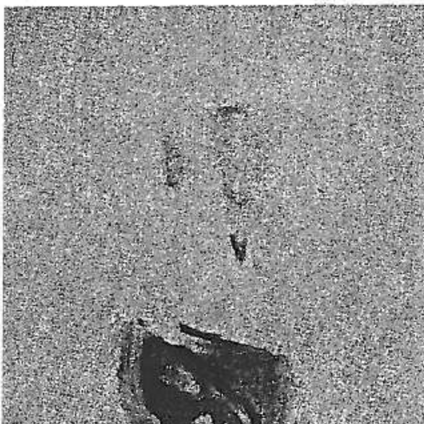
She resumed painting. "It's sort of nice having you people around" (the model, the photographer and me), "it seems friendly. I forget how I usually paint pictures . . .

"If you were in my place, what color would you use? A little care now saves a lot of work later—so I will work on the belt line—I'll save the features for later . . . Maybe I can think of something funny to say . . . Do I have veto power over this article?

"Don't you usually ask the painter questions about the kind of brushes he uses? If any of the readers of ARTNEWS would care to donate some new ones—my brushes won't stand muster."

The first stage illustrated shows about a half hour's work:

half hour's work: a rag was used more [th]an brushes to mark out the main shapes.



Two days were spent working on the face with little change in the background.

While blocking in the background forms the lines of shirt and belt are defined.

[illegible] the vermilion and white face, then a bright Naples yellow [illegible] favorite color) under the arm for the wicker chair, then [illegible] made of cobalt blue, black, alizarin and burnt umber. [illegible] used the rag more than the brush.

While painting the irises, eyebrows and mouth, frequently [illegible] out with a turpentine-soaked rag, she said, "You have [illegible] expression now. I just noticed that little simpering twist [illegible] mouth. Can anyone get away nowadays with a picture [illegible] someone smiling? The fact may be revealed that I prefer [illegible] faces."

In the back of her mind, but only as a precedent she was [illegible] of, was Ingres's portrait of Mme. Rivière, and in the [illegible] of her mind when she painted the earlier portrait of [illegible]stein in his shorts had been Ingres's Valpinçon *Bather*. [illegible] worked on the head for two days; there were fewer ap[illegible] changes as the picture proceeded.

"[illegible]alism is the only way I can do it. Every so often I get [illegible] anxious feeling and would like to produce that bombed-out [illegible] of modern painting. Maybe my form is too closed. I feel [illegible] certain desire for exploding the picture the way some artists [illegible]. Can you explode a painting realistically? I don't know. "Even though the subject was more evanescent in my earlier [illegible], they were still addressed to a naturalistic pattern—I don't know if that desire was and is a real perception or just [illegible] internal sensation having nothing to do with making a [illegible]ing. When I think of the expression of certain objects I [illegible] a sort of expansive force that blows apart the central image [illegible]—I don't really know if that is true or just a trick of [illegible]nizing the image. Maybe it is not explosive when this [illegible] of organization is used so that instead of presenting a [illegible] a face, the features are scattered around the canvas [illegible] in a different relationship. Perhaps it is just another [illegible] of organization not too different from the kind of thing [illegible] happens in a still-life when you rearrange the pear and banana to different places on the canvas. Nothing new would be happening. It seems to me just as much a problem to keep things in their natural order and make a good painting as to have free play and put them wherever you want. The Non-Objective artist still has to relate his elements in some way to make a painting. There isn't anything that can't be found in nature, even if it is a streak of blood or a lightning flash or a painting."

Weinstein asked, "Is abstract painting an entirely different kind of expression?"

"I wonder about how much the mode or content of painting actually alters the value of a painting or its validity. When I think of the history of art, many things have existed, but certain things remain. Social appreciation says you have to be of your time, but what does that mean? A realist painter doesn't copy forms from nature any more than an abstract painter—I don't stick to actual color that closely. Often before I start a painting I want it to be a certain color and then I try to fit the painting to this color. [Continued on page 65]

Working close to the large canvas which occupied most of the little studio's room and light.

[illegible] shorts of the earlier [illegible]ed behind the head.

The floor is tentatively established giving the figure a sense of scale.

Indications of the background painting and furniture are now almost complete.

YOUNG
GALLERIES

Old and Modern
PAINTINGS

1 E. 57th Street
New York City

the
finest
in
creative
framing
expert
restoring
141 w. 54 st.
n.y.c. 19
house of
Heydenryk
Distributors
Chicago: Oehlschlaeger Gallery
San Francisco: Period Frame Co.

ELLONS GALLERY
to 8 pm 17 E. 64 ST.
Sept. 4-15
ARNOLD BARE
Sept. 10-22
EDWIN EARL LEWIS
Sept. 17-29
NATHANIEL DIRK
Sept. 24-Oct. 13
NANCY DRYFOOS

easy-to-hit institutions as the post-office, Frank Brangwyn and the Bishop of London. In antithesis he blessed ports, restless machines of scooped out basins, heavy insect-dredgers, monotonous cranes, heavy chaos of wharves, and here his aim was less sure. Despite the debt to the Futurists revealed by this eulogy of the industrialized world, Lewis pointed out to Marinetti that "while Italy was still a Borgia-haunted swamp of intrigue, England was buckling on the brilliant and electric armor of the modern world." He patronizes Marinetti for his eager "automobilism," but it is Marinetti who is wearing well as a pioneer, not Lewis, who refers complacently to British industrialization without feeling himself committed to its consequences.

The novelty of Vorticism as a mirror of industrialization is in its stress on "the hard, the cold, the mechanical and the static." In this the Vorticists' frozen contraptions differed from both the Futurists and Malevich, and anticipated the static Dada machines of Picabia as well as the grain-silo cult of the 1920s. However, in terms of art produced, Vorticism is often disappointing despite its promising theory. Herbert Read attributes the effort to "take the mind by assault, forgetting that art wins its positions by suble infiltration." But this will not stand as a general rule because the documents of modern art are full of violent and prejudiced statements that are packed with insight and information. The real weaknesses of Vorticism were: (1) Lewis' ambivalent dependence on Futurism (which Edward Wadsworth and C. R. W. Nevinson were more ready to accept), which he never resolved; (2) lack of talent in the artists concerned; (3) a kind of underground conservatism that subverted Lewis' revolution in a rather involved way.

It is symptomatic that Lewis likened the new industrial revolution to a suit of armor, for, in his

of humanist sculpture. Lewis as a between-the-wars Mantegna. Lewis' *A Battery Shelled*, 1919, is the same dimensions as Uccello's *Battle of San Romano* in the National Gallery. This was a condition of the commission for the work, but *quattrocento* formality and clarity appealed to Lewis. The robot becomes a Paduan statue, the aerial view of a port becomes a Florentine perspective exercise. Here, despite his noisy modernity, Lewis, as other British moderns often have been tempted to do, gave a conservative slant to new ideas.

New sculpture

Contemporary sculpture at the Hanover Gallery is notable for two reasons: the new work it shows by two British sculptors, and the presence of César, whose appearance in London is a sign of a break-through in our commercial galleries' relations with Paris. For too long there have been only the chic French sponsored and sometimes invented by London firms. With César at the Hanover Gallery, preliminary sales of Karel Appel at Tooth's, and Rothko and Kline in Gimpel *fils*' summer group show, postwar art is at last getting through.

The new British work is by William Turnbull and Eduardo Paolozzi, both of whom, after a period of hardship, have managed to get their plasters and waxes, respectively, cast in bronze. Both artists have been working on series of multi-evocative heads and human figures. Paolozzi's crusty surfaces and evocative snatches of human detail and contour make a version of the human figure somewhere between violence and comedy. In Turnbull's work, the surfaces are severely held-in, so that heads with eroded and incised surfaces, apparently ancient, are as compact as footballs. By presenting the image at a low level of specificity, Turnbull aims to give his sculpture a potent role in the spectator's perception, acting as points of departure, like the ordinary objects of a child's world.

Jane Freilicher continued from page 49

I want a predominance. This painting started from a certain color response you evoked in me."

"And related to the last painting you did of me? I remember when I came one day wearing black pants and a white shirt, you said. . . ."

"I thought something like this: he has a very relaxed sprawling sort of posture that would be very satisfying to capture. I felt like painting something loose and expansive. Both form and color went click, click . . . The problem of being academic, I tell myself, has nothing to do with what you paint but how you do it. I suppose that how you paint can be what you paint . . ."

"Can it be why?"

"I think so.

"I start with the idea that I don't care about how much the painting resembles the person, but if I get a resemblance it is a source of joy. Nature is so peculiar that reliance on the external fact is not necessarily inhibiting and can tend toward greater freedom from logical or rational considerations. People who 'expose their subconscious' often expose dull material."

At a later stage, painting the green stripes on the shorts in the picture pinned behind Weinstein, she related his head to everything around it. She painted pink over the cheeks making the flesh opaque. Without changing the contours of the face, the likeness improved, the face gained solidity. "Now it might be a good idea to establish the floor. I am not sure because I haven't decided on the scale of the body. I will make a tentative decision."

"Right now [by which I understand she meant at this stage of the

ALDOUS
HUXLEY'S
Heaven and Hell
Reflections on Art
and the Other World

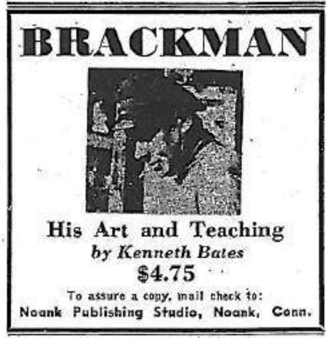
In this truly illuminating new book a tireless explorer of the mind's remote frontiers examines in detail the visual content of visionary experience . . . the strange and wonderful things seen in the far regions of consciousness whenever and however the beholder may be transported there, whether by asceticism, a chemical, or vision-inducing works of art.

It is safe to say that whether the reader has looked at much art or at little, the scales will fall from his eyes. Thanks to the clarity and directness of Mr. Huxley's own perception, the most familiar picture will be newly seen, a much-photographed sculpture will suddenly declare itself, and even works of art we have not yet encountered will enter into our understanding.

"A book of vision"
—Richard Eberhart, *The Nation*
$2.00 *at all bookstores*
HARPER

RECENT
PAINTINGS
PIERRE
SOULAGES
KOOTZ
1018 Madison Ave at 79

BRACKMAN



His Art and Teaching
by Kenneth Bates
$4.75
To assure a copy, mail check to:
Noank Publishing Studio, Noank, Conn.

for SWIFT — RELIABLE
SHIPPING & MOVING
OF ART
call
GRamercy 3-5310
BERKELEY 526 WEST BROADWAY NEW YORK, N. Y.

NEW SCHOOL
66 West 12 St., New York 11

ART

Fall Term Starts Sept. 24

EGAS
Art Director

LEVI
CRAWFORD
PRESTOPINO
TONEY
SCHANKER
MARCUS
YUNKERS
JELINEK
PASCUAL
FRASCONI
LIPTON
GROSS

BRODOVITCH
ABBOTT
STEWART
PILE
LARSSON
VON ALLESCH
SEGEL

Ask for Catalog OR 5-2700

If you are interested
in a professional art education
that completely prepares you
for a future in art

examine thoughtfully
the program of the school
of your choice.

THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY
ART INSTITUTE

invites your examination of its
four-year program starting at
the third year college level,
leading to an M.F.A.

write for catalogue and
full information to:

Millard Sheets, Director
Los Angeles County
Art Institute
2401 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles 57, California

accredited by the Western College Association

c s f a

1956-1957
Fall Session—Sept. 17, 1956
Spring Session—Feb. 11, 1957
B.F.A. Degree in Fine and Commercial Arts — Integrated Humanities Program—Basic Teacher Training.

Internationally Recognized Faculty and Alumni
Approved for Veterans
Catalogue sent upon request
CALIFORNIA SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS
800 Chestnut Street
San Francisco 11 ORdway 3-2640

THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM ART SCHOOL
AUGUSTUS PECK, Supervisor
60 Fine Arts and Crafts courses for the serious student, the professional and the amateur. Distinguished faculty. Morning, Afternoon, and Evening classes in Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Etching and Engraving, Ceramics, Enameling, Textile Design, Woodcut, Jewelry, 3 Dimensional Design, and special classes

painting) I am not interested in any painters."

"Mme. Cézanne [in the portrait of *Mme. Cézanne in the Conservatory*] looks so reproachful. Bob de Niro says Cézanne has misled a lot of painters and in a way ruined modern painting because the means are so exposed, and he was such a great painter that lots of painters get no further than the means. The process of the painting becomes the subject of the painting."

"If the process is not the subject, what is the subject?" asked Weinstein.

"In the old masters, the image is so strong that the process seems to be magic. With Cézanne you can see where he started and where he finished. In my own painting I sometimes have a desire to cover all traces, but you then give up freshness and looseness and a certain charm that comes of being able to see the process. Paintings that have more of a finished look lose in translucency. I would like to be masterful enough to cover the traces and still have the painting project, or be so alive as to do more than project. There is a certain charm in the fact that the hands of Mme. Cézanne are incomplete. Also a nervous quickening which is exciting. It makes you think of the artist rather than of his painting. Often I am annoyed with him when I see how his mind was working. Maybe I am presuming too much—actually he has influenced me a great deal. But I think the Venetians and Rubens and other old masters have such an overwhelming mastery about how their pictures were made that, though you could copy one, it still wouldn't tell you more than the final effect.

"In the catalogue for the twenty-one painters, Tom Hess says to look for the how of it—the speed, rise and fall of the pigment and so on. This comes from Cézanne, probably from Impressionism, too, but I find it most noticeable in Cézanne who was the first to make you conscious of this as something to think about. Nowadays it is difficult not to do that. In our time new painting might be of a kind that did not—or it might come to an end when painting is the whole subject of the painting.

"In Cézanne there is a searching, humble, honest approach. One would expect the work to remain more anonymous, and yet you feel Cézanne's presence almost as the subject of the painting. It is a paradox. I am not against it, it's just that it comes to my mind. I am wondering about doing the kind of painting that depends more on the image than on the hand of the painter. Does this have importance? In Dali what one is struck by is the image, and yet it all seems dead. To make live paintings today perhaps the hand is more important than the eye?"

Perhaps the eye of the spectator is more important than the eye of the painter, as in acting, where the sincerity of the actor is not an

expression, a cataclysmic grandeur is attractive to me. When I did more abstract painting I felt I was trying to get this aggressiveness by a more violent orchestration, just as in music you might hear a piece orchestrated in a modern way, but the basic elements are more conventional than all the nervous orchestration would lead you to believe at first. In a way I feel that painting with a natural subject more clearly exposed allows me to deal more squarely with the active structure of the painting and I would like to be able to get a real rather than a superficial intensity. I might some day paint abstractly if I felt I could control the expression more fully. I would like to control the expression to the point of real uncontrolled expression."

While the model was posing, the chief changes had to do with putting in and taking out; and simplifying the background painting; also, the legs gave considerable trouble. She analyzed this in the following way; the supporting leg should have the tension, but at first it was the other way around. It was a matter of giving the legs more substance—which is not a graphic matter.

The black streak on the floor makes a connection with the background, and the telephone books on the floor seem to create a real space to the left and behind. After the canvas was stretched, she became interested in the "abstract" considerations of the painting. The left strip seemed flat: the wall and floor, on one plane. Also it seemed too narrow behind the model. She felt an urge to "push the canvas apart" and with orange chalk she made horizontal stripes on the left to see what they would do. She emphasized the wainscoting (an interior horizon), and as the orange stripes looked inconsistent, she partly covered them with paint. Then it seemed as if the elbow on the left were pasted to the black area behind the model, and she made the space more airy. The spiral of the telephone books now takes the eye away from the aureole shape of the whole, and helps to widen the canvas. (This aureole shape comes perhaps from the way her memory distorted the painting of Mme. Rivière.) But then the picture seemed to topple over to the right, and so the emphatic white at the upper right holds it by bringing it forward. In the last stage the painting lost a wooliness—the result of indecisions and corrections—that had been increasing until now. It was overcome when she discovered her painting and could let its true nature come out.

"Do the books look too incorporeal?" I have no interest in depicting them more definitely.

"Originally the cool area at the right was too like the brown red one at the top left. If they were too much alike they would be too strong, which would make the middle weak. This is against 'the rules of composition,' and I wanted to

FAMOUS ARTISTS
ART STUD
LEAGUE OF
which is now in its eighty... and offers a most direct ... to a career in the fine ... plied arts. No entrance ... ments; tuition by the month ... tration—any time; 1 session ... also one-evening-a-week class ... and Saturday classes for ... children. Special discounts ... tinuous registration.
Write or phone for free ...
STEWART KLONIS, Dir...
215 W. 57th St., N.Y.C.

NATIONAL ACAD...
OF DESIGN
Special Exhibi...
(Members and Non-m...)
Nov. 15-Dec. ...
GRAPHIC ART
and
WATERCOL...
(No Drawings, Serigraphs ...)
A JURY — $1350 IN ...
No entry fee or commiss...
Work due Nov. ...
WRITE FOR PROS...
1083 Fifth Ave., New York

PENNSYLVANIA
ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS
PAINTING • SCULP...
MURAL • ILLUST...
Scholarships (European Study) ...
Write: R. R. ENTENMAN...
114 N. Broad, Philadelphia ...

COLORADO SPRING...
FINE ARTS CENT...
WOELFFER
SABEAN
CHENOWETH
GRALAPP
Fall Registration Sept. 24
Registrar: 30 W. Dale, Colo. Springs

ARCHIPEN...
SCHOOL OF MODERN ...
PAINTINGS—SCULPTURE—...
CERAMICS DESIGNING & TECH...
REGISTER NOW
DAY CLASS & LOW FEE EVENING ...
1947 BROADWAY, N. Y. C.

CLEVELAN...

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

ELLE DECOR

August / September 1994

private pleasures

Jane Freilicher's paintings have a low-key beauty that celebrates—while subverting—the simple certainties of the everyday

KLAUS KERTESS. PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID SEIDNER

For more than 25 years, Jane Freilicher has been looking through the windows in her New York and Water Mill studios and transforming the view through the planes of glass into the planes of her painting, without ever creating the same view the same way twice.

Like our memory, her painting does not mirror what has been perceived but rather constantly reconstructs it, consciously and unconsciously influenced by the variables that impinge on the specific moment of retrieval. The atmospheric conditions of the mind are as critical to the view as those of the weather outside. Literally and figuratively, Freilicher's paintings conflate what is inside with what is outside.

The repertoire of changes that the same view undergoes are seldom dramatic and seem quite offhand. The individual paintings themselves appear quite casual as well—in their focus, their composition, and execution. The artist and, in turn, the viewer are constantly in the process of adjusting the view. In New York the views are rather wonderful but not overpowering: small skyscrapers and the Hudson River seen through the glassed-in terrace of Freilicher's 1930s penthouse on lower Fifth Avenue. Of late, the painted view has become a series of flickering building planes that are almost dissolved by and simultaneously emanate from the brightly lit and focused floral still life on a table in the studio. Almost as corny as it is compelling, the still life begins to unfold its subtle subversion and seduction. The tabletop so securely anchored to the bottom edge of the canvas begins to waver in its perspectival foreshortening and becomes the unstable plane that the building tops rise from. The flowers that, at first, looked so specifically delineated begin to blur and to give up their contours to the flatness of the canvas they were drawn from. The suppressed but ceaseless movement of the brush keeps resolution in suspension. Buildings and flowers become part of a moody rhythm that orchestrates the flatness of the plane. Plainspoken, intimate, and lucid, Freilicher's paintings have a low-key beauty that celebrates, while subverting, the simple certainties of the everyday.

Freilicher's nonchalant reveling in artifice has taken an unexpected turn in recent paintings that include Watteau's melancholy troubadour

Right: A table holds Freilicher's brushes, oils, and painting palette, all neatly aligned. She rarely uses acrylics. Above right: A still life called *Cymbidium Orchids* (1994; oil) rests on the studio's highly polished quarry-tile floor next to its model. Above: Freilicher's studio is tented to filter the 19th-floor light that streams into her 1930s penthouse—truly a place for private pleasures. Resting on the foreground easel is *Summer Flowers, Urban Dusk* (1994; oil). On the rear easel is *Flowers with Parrot* (1994; oil).

The quietly structured directness of Freilicher's poetry, with its flowing paint and light, grows out of her deep respect for two seemingly divergent traditions of painterliness. Emerging from a year in Hans Hofmann's School of Fine Arts in the late '40s, she started to make gestural abstractions related to the all-over, radiant opticality of the Abstract Expressionists. In the course of the 1950s, together with fellow Hofmann student Larry Rivers, Hofmann alumna Nell Blaine, and the older Fairfield Porter, she set about reexploring representation. All of them felt the need to ground their paint in the observed, and they began to look at the late work of Edouard Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard. Slowly they breathed new life into the moribund traditions of landscape and genre painting. Freilicher began to rein in her agitated strokes, shortening and slowing them until they began to congeal in skeins of paint and light that approached but never completely settled into discrete profiles. By the 1970s, her paintings began to rustle quietly with the soft winds of making that were driven as much by the abstract forces of painting as they were by the small and large wonders of the three-dimensionally seen and felt. Her self-effacement turned into a virtuosity that created evermore complex parallels between the planes of sight and the plane of painting; diaphanous draperies and clouds become overlapping currents of white light, flowing in two directions; flowers cut off from their container by the canvas's bottom edge rise up to merge with the green fields they once grew in; verticals frame and transform exterior views into images mirrored in the interior.

Freilicher's nonchalant reveling in artifice has taken an unexpected turn in several of her recent paintings that insouciantly include Antoine Watteau's melancholy troubadour from his *Mezzetin* (about 1720), who first made his appearance in a sketchier homage she did in 1950. In a recent painting, he now sits quite comfortably on a bench on Freilicher's terrace, serenading an African parrot perched atop a potted plant. So deliberately flanked by verticals is he that he becomes part of a separate plane inserted into the present, turning the seen into the imagined. At once a loving tribute to a kindred spirit from the past and an embodiment of Freilicher's ability to transform the plane into sonorous polyphony, this musician celebrates the isolated moment of reverie so crucial to survival in the urban cacophony. Watteau's paint hovers in delicate vapors on his canvas; Freilicher's paint bristles softly in more matter-of-fact substantiality. She, like Watteau, makes clear just how necessary and intelligent private pleasures can be. ✸

Art in America

Vanishing Acts

Though Jane Freilicher's work continues to exploit a familiar repertoire of landscape and interior imagery, the artist's new paintings have undergone a change in mood; below, the author describes Freilicher's subject as "depicted absence."

Above, Jane Freilicher: **Migratory Season,** *1988, oil on canvas, 72 by 82 inches. Opposite,* **Sundown,** *1988, oil on canvas, 68 by 53 inches.*

BY STEPHEN WESTFALL

Sometimes the paint in Jane Freilicher's canvases seems breathed onto the surface, the way breath fogs glass: her mists of color give the impression they could vanish in an instant, evaporating in sunlight and currents of air. This transient, aerated quality is part of the character of Freilicher's particular brand of painterly realism, and one of its effects is the suggestion of possible evanescence or incipient loss. Her paintings impart an offhand melancholy without appearing particularly melancholic themselves—they seem at once gay and poignant. The works evoke a sensibility which has since mid-century flowered within a certain milieu of New York painters and poets for whom offhandedness and the appearance of ease has been a supreme expressive virtue.

After studying with Hans Hofmann in 1947 and picking up her

From a Window Near the Sky, *1990, oil on canvas, 47 by 50 inches.*

Perhaps no painter since Bonnard has so personalized interior and exterior, so that the latter is pointedly seen as an extension of the former, with no clear boundary separating the two.

master's degree at Columbia a year later, Freilicher found herself, along with a number of other painters of her generation, attempting to sort out the various plastic and metaphysical developments of 20th-century painting which had culminated in the gestural and reductive extremes of Abstract Expressionism. I don't believe abstraction was ever really an option for Freilicher or the other New York realists, any more than philosophy or cultural anthropology was likely to have been the ticket for her poet friends—John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, Frank O'Hara, James Schuyler, among others. It's a question of temperament—in her case an abiding interest in character and the domestic domain and its accoutrements rather than in the windswept bluffs of history and the metaphysics of "Action." Of course, character itself is a Big Idea—one readily discernible in the work of the Abstract Expressionists themselves; it's more the intimacy of address that distinguishes her from them. However impressed Freilicher was, as she began her career, with the artistic ferment of her time and locale, the syntax of her pictures seems to have been destined from the start to settle into a diaristically anecdotal and confiding tone.

Principally a painter of landscapes and interior settings for still lifes, Freilicher discloses a distinctly personal relationship to these genres, leaving us in no doubt that these are *her* interiors and landscapes, her rooms with windows and the views beyond. Perhaps no painter since Bonnard has so personalized interior and exterior, so that the latter is seen as an extension of the former, with no clear boundary between the two. Bonnard certainly holds formal sway in Freilicher's painting, from the light-dazzled hazes of color to the charting of passages from inside to outside and back again. For Freilicher, Bonnard's influence may have been partly a question of timing. A great Bonnard retrospective was mounted at the Museum of Modern Art in 1948, just as Freilicher was gathering the tools to find her own expressive register, and that show exerted an enormous influence on abstract and representational painters of the time.

What's more, the lessons Freilicher absorbed from Hofmann were in a sense a preparation for seeing Bonnard. Hofmann alerted the

Roses and Chrysanthemums, *1990, oil on canvas, 27 by 36 inches.*

eye to the interconnectedness of drawing and color, how different velocities and intervals in mark-making could serve as a drawing corollary to changing chroma intensities and temperatures. No less important, however, was the emphasis on the moment of process, the "now" of the painting's coming into being. For all the pretext of theory and exegesis bound up in Hofmann's school, spontaneity was also a deeply held value. Bonnard, meanwhile, clearly labors after the *effect* of spontaneity—and often enough he achieves it. His drawing appears to begin in tentative threads which are strengthened in the retracing that ensues. His colors frequently seem transformed by the last transparent wash, which lifts them into a relational light.

Looking over Freilicher's body of work, one has the sense that she has never had to work quite as hard as Bonnard to bring a picture to a state she could term "finished." It's likely that his example made her seeming effortlessness possible. In any case, I believe that an acute difference between the two painters in their attitude toward subject accounts for their correspondingly distinct approaches to paint application. Both artists are concerned with intimate representation of household property. However, the views presented by Bonnard are mediated by the presence of another, his wife, Marthe. Much has been written about the intricacies of the couple's relationship.[1] For the purposes of this discussion, however, it is sufficient to note that Mme. Bonnard is *there* among the things and spaces. Late 19th- and 20th-century interiors in general, and even exteriors viewed from within the domicile, are likely to include a woman (often nude or partially clothed), and when painted by a man this woman is often present in the role of the beloved. What Bonnard "owns" with his eyes is made erotically tactile through the presence of Mme. Bonnard. His patting touch passes from this surface to that surface, from skin to furniture to windowsill and beyond—to the trees, the clouds. Light is turned to touch, everything is interlocked in a contour of desire. The objective world merges with his beloved.

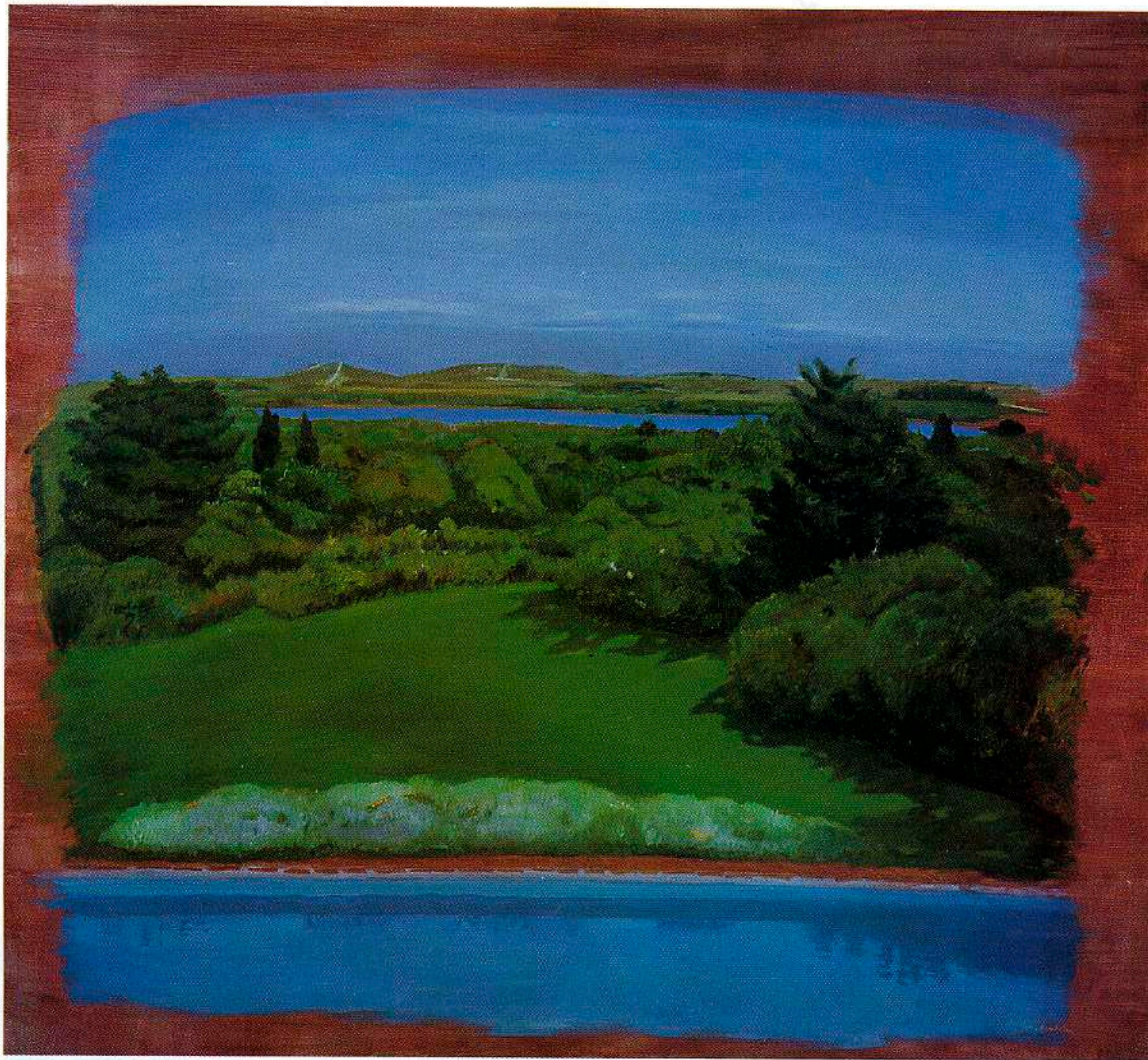
Freilicher does not propose the unity of the world through the presence of another. Part of the drama—and comedy—in her paintings springs from the sense that, in fact, things have come slightly unhinged. I have already noted that paint barely seems to make a physical impact on her canvases, but Freilicher has a knack of honoring the separateness of each thing she depicts in such a manner that her light touch with a brush weaves a wide range of configurations. Each surface of depicted material, from shifting leaf patterns outdoors to an interior's tablecloth, curtain and glass bowl, has its own characteristically painted mark. Freilicher's range of marks and her glowing, pearlescent middle-range tints function as a kind of inventory control for this personal catalogue of the visible.

Window on the Bay, *1990, oil on canvas, 40 by 50 inches.*

Freilicher's recent paintings, which were exhibited at the Fischbach Gallery last spring, reprise her basic images: landscapes from around her Long Island residence and as seen from the glass enclosure of her studio, New York City rooftops viewed from her studio in Manhattan and vases of flowers set against these views. The images may be those we've grown to expect from her, but there is a perceptible shift in mood in this new work. For all the freshness of her touch and palette and the somewhat ungainly grace of her compositions, Freilicher's paintings have never felt more deeply infused with a sense of the elegiac. Painting is in part and by nature a commemorative practice; consequently, the nostalgic tone is never very far away. Freilicher's recent paintings seem to place new emphasis on this quality of moodiness, however, and they do so by nudging her pictorial themes further in the direction of a depicted absence.

Absence has many ways of making itself visible in pictures. The feminist revitalization of a social critique of representation, most notably in the writings of Griselda Pollock,[2] has heightened our sensitivity toward who's looking where and at what in representational painting. From this standpoint, Freilicher's choice not to put family and friends in her pictures is as significant as Bonnard's, Fairfield Porter's and Alex Katz's contrary decisions. In her earlier paintings, the human presence that hovers about, retreating beyond the borders of the canvas after having adjusted the bouquet, or the figure half-caught peering out of a mirror at herself and us, is Freilicher herself. To borrow from Pollock, it might not be too much to suggest that if there is a male presence at all in these pictures he is watching Freilicher watch herself.[3] Here, the melancholy aspect of her painting may be a culturally reinforced projection of an absence in the face of an abiding need, a projection which may have little to do with Freilicher's own thoughts and feelings. Gender representation is one issue raised by Freilicher's work, but there are others. Her preoccupation with absence directs our attention toward questions of class privilege and intimations of mortality.

One of the principal theatrical conventions in Freilicher's pictures is her positioning of our point of view at a threshold, usually a studio window through which the gaze reaches across a landscape or cityscape. The most remarkable development in her recent paintings is the manner in which the studio interior has dropped out of several pictures, leaving us just on the other side of the glass from the landscape filling the picture plane. We know we are still inside because the view is interrupted by sweeping verticals of gauzy white drapery. It's as though the landscape has been pierced by one of Barnett Newman's zips posing as a veil. By pushing our noses to the glass, Freilicher establishes a point of view that is innately expressive of a kind of yearning—the eye leaps past the drapes and



Red Ground, ***1989, oil on canvas, 70 by 76 inches. All photos this article courtesy Fischbach Gallery.***

through the window to a receding "there" that, we are at the same time reminded, can never be "here." Freilicher is acutely aware that her Long Island vistas are threatened by encroaching land development.[4] Exurban seclusion is a privilege conferred by relative wealth and the property that attaches to it—a staged illusion that becomes harder to maintain in the face of advancing subdivisions. An isolation that might be a burden on a personal level becomes something to be fiercely protected when regarded against a larger social field. Privacy has become a luxury. These paintings record another kind of vanishing, since the time is rapidly passing when an uncluttered view stretching to the horizon could stir a sense of the possible.

It is clear that Freilicher is painting what she loves, and that much of her love extends to painting itself. She practices an allegiance to the visible framed by types of easel painting having their origin in Flemish materialism: still lifes, views of fine domestic objects, arrangements of studio paraphernalia. These genres along with bourgeois portraiture have, despite everything, remained more or less vital until the present day. It's easier to ascribe a set of social and psychological significations to pictorial modes in retrospect than it is at the time of their creation. The formal and anecdotal rewards of Freilicher's paintings derive from the deep pleasure she herself takes in her domestic surroundings and in sketching an eccentric domestic order pushed to the edge of collapse. An acute sense of the ephemeral resides in everything she does: an elongated flower stem creates a powerful compositional diagonal while threatening to tip over its supporting vase; a bunch of white peonies propped on a stool in front of a landscape of rambling fields and tree breaks suggests an acculturated end product—a transitory, muffled explosion of particular white blossoms set against a more slowly changing rural scene made general by distance. The residual melancholy, the low-key attenuation of her compositional structures, the rippling air are all reminiscent of another French painter favored by Freilicher, Watteau. Freilicher's views are more intimate, and their depopulation tends to assume a solitary gaze, but she likewise renders a vision of the good life poised at a crucial change in season. □

1. Perhaps the most intensely lyrical treatment of the subject is John Berger's brief essay, "Bonnard," reprinted in Berger, *The Sense of Sight*, New York, Pantheon, 1986, pp. 92-97.
2. Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference*, New York and London, Routledge, 1988.
3. See "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in Pollock, *Vision and Difference*, pp. 50-90.
4. Robert Doty, ed., *Jane Freilicher*, New York, Taplinger, 1986. Interview with Robert Doty, p. 53.

Author: *Stephen Westfall is an artist who also writes about art.*

FISCHBACH GALLERY 24 WEST 57 STREET NEW YORK 10019 (212) PL9.2345

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, JUNE 16, 1989

Taking a Look or Two Back in the Hamptons

By ROBERTA SMITH

It being the middle of June, the annual migration of the New York art world to the eastern end of Long Island has not yet begun in earnest. There's still a certain freshness to the charmingly redundant greeting "Are you out here?" as people try to figure out if you own, rent or are merely visiting for the weekend. And the frenzied socializing of August is weeks away.

Still, for those already out there and needing an art fix amid the mounting fun and frolic, there are some fairly substantial shows (and more in the offing) to be found in the museums and exhibition spaces of the Hamptons.

Most of these shows cast a glance backward. At the Parrish Art Museum at 25 Job's Lane in Southampton, an institution entering its 10th decade, there is an exhibition of paintings entirely drawn from the museum's collection and covering over 150 years of American art (through July 23).

Substantial shows precede the heaviest part of the annual migration.

Taking a shorter-range view, the Dia Art Foundation on Corwith Avenue, off Main Street, in Bridgehampton has just begun its summer season with a survey of Louise Bourgeois's sculpture from the 1960's. And tomorrow afternoon, the Guild Hall Museum in East Hampton is to open an exhibition titled "En Plein Air: The Art Colonies at East Hampton and Old Lyme, 1880-1930."

•

In various ways, the landscape motif promises to dominate the summer exhibitions in the Hamptons. This makes perfect sense, considering that the area has offered succeeding generations of visiting and resident artists verdant uncluttered vistas to paint.

At the Parrish, there are only a handful of portraits or abstractions among the 57 canvases on view, and visitors expecting to see works by the Hamptons' most famous postwar artists — Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning — will be disappointed. Instead, they will be treated to a mini-exegesis on the ways of paint, leisure and landscape that has many high points and only a few low ones, in which small wins out over large and the quick study over the major statement.

Beginning with several Hudson River School paintings from the 1830's and ending with "Winter Solstice," an energetic landscape abstraction from the early 1980's by Katherine Porter, the exhibition attests to the mesmerizing power that nature has exerted on two centuries of American artists and also to the landscape's gradual encroachment by human forces. It also bears witness to the influence of the French masters — from Manet to Monet to Matisse — on American painting and generally speaking, reflects well on an institution that has tried to keep regional awareness and connoisseurship in careful and mutually illuminating balance.

•

The show includes six paintings each by the painters William Merritt Chase, the most convincing of the American Impressionists, and Fairfield Porter, a postwar realist, both of whom spent much time painting in Southampton. It also features Alfred Cornelius Howland's workmanlike 1890 painting of St. Andrew's Dune Church, the Gothic Revival structure that still dominates the approach from Main Street in Southampton to the Atlantic Ocean.

But the Parrish collection also allows the viewer to contrast such locally produced gems as Chase's "Bayberry Bush" — a sparkling, gregarious scene of his three daughters playing in a field bordered by the artist's comfortable shingled cottage — with the solitary splendor of "The Monastery" (circa 1885) by Albert Pinkham Ryder. A moody nocturnal mix of clouds and architecture, this painting is one of the exhibition's masterpieces.

Between these two extremes of sensibility, the path is dotted with noteworthy works by artists past and present, well known and not. Irving Ramsey Wiles's "Scallop Boats, Peconic" (circa 1910), a small velvety treament of white sails and gray sea, and Otis A. Bullard's "Barn Scene in Genessa County" (1845), an unexpected mixture of American genre and trompe l'oeil painting, deserve special attention. So does a trio of lushly painted landscapes from the 1950's and 60's by Fairfield Porter, Alex Katz and Jane Freilicher. However influenced by Matisse, they also find a common ancestor in John Sloan's marvelously robust "Hill, Main Street, Gloucester" (1916), which hangs just around the corner.

•

Fittingly, these four paintings set the stage for the Parrish's next exhibition: "Painting Horizons: Jane Freilicher, Albert York, April Gornik." With Klaus Kertess as curator and opening on July 30, it will bring together the work of three contemporary landscape painters from three generations who maintain studios on the East End of Long Island.

Landscapes of an infinitely more abstract and internal kind contribute to Louise Bourgeois's bronze and plaster sculptures at the Dia Art Foundation in Bridgehampton. Dating from 1962 to 1968, these works come with such titles as "Lair" and "Unconscious Landscape," and communicate a persistent desire to fuse references to the body, to architecture and to landscape. Suggestive, sometimes simultaneously, of mountains and melting ice cream, caves

FRIDAY, JUNE 16, 1989

and body cavities, beehives and crumbling towers, her forms are both primordial and sophisticated, emotionally loaded and historically resonant.

Such richness suggests that this artist's importance has still not been accurately measured. It's not every day that a body of work can call to mind Robert Smithson's "Spiral Jetty," the Venus of Willendorf, Medardo Rosso's blurred forms and Bernard Rudofsky's book "Architecture Without Architects." After the Bourgeois exhibition, which closes July 9, the Dia Foundation plans to exhibit "The Vocali (A.E.I.O.U.)," a recently completed suite of five paintings by Francesco Clemente, opening July 15.

•

If the landscape theme in the Parrish show has a marvelous inadvertency that invites us to make our own connections, "En Plein Air," opening tomorrow afternoon at the Guild Hall Museum in East Hampton, sets a very particular historical and geographical agenda. It promises to delve into the formation of two American summer-art colonies in the late 1800's — one in East Hampton, the other in Old Lyme, Conn. — and to trace their influence, especially where the habit of painting in the open air was concerned.

Organized with the Florence Griswold Museum of Old Lyme, this show is a cultural exchange. Works by members of the East Hampton art colony, generally agreed to have been founded in the late 1880's by Thomas Moran and his family, will be seen only in Old Lyme. At the same time, works by the artists of the Lyme School, which included Childe Hassam and such lesser known painters as Everett Warner and Matilda Browne, will be seen in East Hampton.

Judging from the catalogue alone, it is hard to know if the works in the Guild Hall portion of the exhibition will be as engaging as the histories of ideas, friendships and summer pleasures traced in its essays. But the show and catalogue together should communicate the sense of place, community and joint endeavor basic to any art scene — even the current one.

"En Plein Air" will remain at Guild Hall Museum, 158 Main Street in East Hampton, through July 30. It will be followed by "New Narrative," an exhibition of eight artists from the eastern end of Long Island that opens Aug. 13.

Other art venues in the area include the Benton Gallery, 365 County Road 39, Southampton; the Elaine Benson Gallery, Montauk Highway, Bridgehampton, and the Vered Gallery, 68 Park Place, East Hampton. The East Hampton Center for Contemporary Art, 16R Newtown Lane, has an exhibition of paintings by Veronika Anita Teuber and an outdoor installation of faux boulders by Grace Knowlton.

Nearby, at Rank and Company, 4 Newtown Lane, is a sight no one should miss: a collection of more than 30 primitive stringed instruments, made in Appalachia from 1880 to 1930. The collection, which includes violins, guitars and banjos made of everything from cigar boxes and tin cans to sheet iron, speaks of the will to make music as vividly as it does of the instrumental distortions and abbreviations of Cubism.

Richard P. Meyer

Fairfield Porter work at Parrish Museum in Southampton.

ART IN AMERICA

Jane Freilicher: *The Potato Truck*, 1974, oil on canvas, 68 by 80 inches; at Fischbach.

Jane Freilicher at Fischbach

Jane Freilicher showed paintings of the landscape outside her studio in Water Mill, Long Island, along with still-lifes and views of the city from the windows of her apartment in New York. Thus she is a painter of "what there is there," in Kenneth Koch's phrase. The Long Island landscape is beautiful, though not spectacularly so in reproduction, whether photographic or painterly: its beauty is more a question of light and atmosphere, both singularly pure and precise because of the nearby ocean. The land is flat, though in the distance there are some discreet undulations which pass for hills. The buildings, at least those the artist can see from her studio, are a discreet melange—old frame houses of the type that used to be called "beautiful homes," less distinguished newer ones, and barns and sheds. It is a landscape as good as any other, perhaps nicer than many, but the artist is less interested in whatever picturesque qualities it may possess than in its exemplariness. Somehow everything she touches is revealed as a prototype, a sample of what there is there, though she would be the first to c[illegible]claim a[illegible] [illegible]scendental intent and is probably unaware of this quality in her work. Obviously, she paints what she sees, but it happens that she sees a lot.

Creation—fresh, unassuming, a little awkward still with some of its folds not yet shaken out, is her subject; creation even in the joyous, homely sense Milton imagined it:

> Forth flourished thick the clust'ring vine, forth crept
> The swelling gourd, up stood the corny reed
> Embattled in her field: add the humble shrub
> And bush with frizzled hair implicit.

Nothing is made to look more important than it is, some things are even kidded a little. One is tempted to ask the floppy *Marsh Bouquet*: "And just who do you think *you* are?" When the houses down the road or the tower of the Con Ed building seem to be giving themselves airs, when the field outside the studio momentarily assumes a brightness that is out of keeping with the glum cast of light in the sky, these discrepancies are noted, but sympathetically. Everything is free to be itself, nothing is too tentative or modest to be included in her factual but generous account of what she sees.

In the landscapes, the "interesting" part of the scenery—a bay, a line of trees, a roof poking mysteriously out of the foliage—is usually in the distance, as is true of most landscapes; the foreground may be occupied by some "frizzled" shrubbery. That's the way the view is, but one can't help reading a kind of moral order into the way the scale of things is managed: these are "democratic vistas." In *Potato Truck*, everything hinges on the truck, a tiny patch of man-made red in the distance, organizing space like Stevens' jar; but what is closest and biggest are some bushes. They are elaborated more thoroughly than anything else in the picture perhaps just because of their shapelessness and their inability to benefit very much from celebration by a poet or a naturalist. So they are left in their frumpiness, looking unfinished despite the articulation lavished on them. Nature is efficient but not always neat, and the romantic depths of the painting, suavely and succinctly painted, seem to recognize the justice of this and efface themselves before its logic. And two of the still-lifes, *One Cat, Two Fish* and *Objects on a Table*, are miniature cosmogonies: all things in them co-exist and are allowed their idiosyncrasies, as is subtly indicated by the varied handling of paint. The cityscape outside has a Guardi-esque fluidity, but on the table things are less easy: some objects (the loaf of bread, a branch of broccoli) are deftly encompassed; others are allowed to appear as problematical, as recalcitrant to easy solutions as they would have looked to Cézanne.

The swift transition from style to style is one of the most remarkable things in Freilicher's painting. The denotative and connotative jostle each other, with no fixed boundaries; a rough tangle of brushwork menaces a sleekly realistic passage. A field as minutely painted as Ruysdael would have done it leads to a cloud on the horizon which really isn't a cloud but a brushstroke. "Non-representational" painting is always lurking in the background, or the foreground for that matter, of an ostensibly straightforward account of a landscape, and of course landscape is like that; the eye deals with some of it and neglects the rest. Other painters have made the point, but in Jane Freilicher's case the transitions are so gradual, the differences so close, that her grammar of styles can easily go unnoticed. The viewer imagines he is looking at an "objective" account of trees or a table top without realizing that they have been dismantled and put back together again almost seamlessly. It is only on closer inspection that the oddity, the purposeful inconsistencies of tone, the fact that everything doesn't hang together quite as it should, become apparent. By then one has accepted the anomalies as the norms that they are. Her purpose in ruffling the surface, in injecting not her own note but that of things, in showing up each element's poignant desire to make its own point, to put itself across, to be accepted on its own terms, is to restore the primitive calm that the world presumably had before anyone had looked at it, to reinstate that higher naturalness which can only become visible with the help of a little artifice. She succeeds both in recreating the innocent look things presumably once had and reconciling it with the knowledge of them we have now. —*John Ashbery*

293 & 297 TENTH AVENUE
515 WEST 27TH STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10001

TELEPHONE 212 563 4474
PAULKASMINGALLERY.COM