

Essay by Gabriel Laderman, 2005

Megan Williamson is a painter formed by the sophisticated use of the French modernist tradition. Although her paintings may look at first glance especially indebted to the fauve painters, Matisse, Marquet, and Roualt, for example, they contain as well solid abstract structure derived as well from an understanding of cubist principles of construction. This, of course, was also true of the finest of the Fauves, as well. But her double debt to them and to the cubists is a hallmark of her great compositional acuity.

She has developed in a pretty straight line over the past 30 years, although I know she sees it as a series of tangents to a central series of issues. Her work has become more and more invested in a color sensibility which I can only see elsewhere in the most glorious years of fauve painting. No earlier American painter deserves to be called a Fauve as much as she does, except, Louis Matthiasdottir, and on occasion, Nell Blaine.

Since the coming and going of Abstract expressionism, with those exceptions, there has been very little work of an expressionist figurative nature, in this country which can claim, either her pedigree, or her intensity as an artist. An expressionist artist shows herself in the way the brush dances over the canvas, annotating the forms and colors of the motif. But only the very rare expressionist also shows a sensibility refined enough while in the throes of painterly passion to find absolute pictorial locations for these paroxysms of gesture which fulfill their pictorial needs. The exact placement, or exact replacement of every mark and each color must occur for the painting to succeed. And all of this needs to be done at white hot speed. This she seems able to do without fail.

It is important to note that the drawing with color which has become her favorite mode of painting requires a lot more than absolute color clarity. The drawing must be perfectly placed and in its lines and movements must complement not only the other lines, but the fields of color, small and large into which they have been dropped, and must complete the pictorial action of the plane, her canvas.

It is a pleasure to look at her work, because it delights the eye and the mind like a stroll through a garden full of flowers. She has added beauty to our world and we should be grateful for its presence in such clarity and abundance. I hope to see many more of her works.

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