



C O N N I E H A Y E S

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Ben Shahn Galleries
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Nancy Einreinhofer, Gallery Director

One painting in this exhibition—*Barely Visible-Vinalhaven*— evokes both anticipation and longing, arrival and leave-taking. A form that stands for an island on the carpet of a rainy sea moves forward, or recedes depending on how it is read. The colors are dense, richly somber. The painting is full of space and dusky light. It is one of Connie Hayes' own favorite paintings and it represents a direction in which she is moving.

Connie Hayes is a dedicated and prolific artist. She is defined by her painting; her studio has always dominated her living space. To her, painting is living; what strengthens her work enriches her life.

Color – original, glorious, sometimes outrageous – is the heart of Hayes' work. *Barely Visible*, even more than some of the brilliant works, indicates how far she has come in her understanding of the complexities of color. Her sensibility is related to Fairfield Porter, the artist whose work she most admires. She delights in the manner in which Soutine throws down a mark and there's a whole skull, and that shows in her own work. When she works with the figure there is the shock and mystery of David Park.

But her color is her own and she uses it audaciously. She likens it to playing the piano on one end of the scale or the other—or bringing together the full range. She speaks of the infinity and subtlety of mixing color and wonders aloud how much magenta she can put into the mix and still not reach garish.

Beyond the real accomplishment of developing and extending her palette, she is continuously refining her vision so that the scene before her disappears; houses and roads become blocks and licks of color. Strata and organic forms replace the broad landscape, marks signify a person, light tells time. She says simply, "I try to paint in the present what I think I haven't done yet."

Credits

Designed by Helen Cheng

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color and for the loan of paintings
from their collection.

Her vision has been sharpened through the past eight summers by a unique personal project which Hayes calls “Borrowed Views” She arranged stays of a weekend or a week or two at other people’s homes where she could set up her easel and paint from nature, arranging a gift exchange of a painting for her lodging. In some instances she painted interiors, “Poking my nose even deeper into their [the owners] spaces”, she says.

But Hayes is not painting scenes or telling stories. Places are not important to her, except as springboards to abstract paintings. She is tied to the sensation; its sensual, visceral, perceptual impact. Her paintings, many of them small and square [her favorite shape] are oil on gessoed paper, which gives them a lush surface. The small size is irrelevant; these gems have the impact of much larger work.

The new paintings have as their source Maine [Hayes’ native state, where she makes her home half of each year] and the Italian countryside where she has traveled extensively, most recently last fall. The Maine paintings are more open and their colors show a coldness and a wetness related to the Maine climate. The Italian paintings are from



Living Room, Islesboro
30”x 30” Oil on canvas, 1995

photographs, often taken in a panoramic progression, then printed in a strip, which gives Hayes the daily continuity of her travels. In effect, these rolls of photographs are her sketch book and, by themselves, they are exciting to see. Totally unplanned, they present juxtapositions and shifts of color and texture that provided a wealth of painting material for this exhibition and for paintings still to come.

For years, Hayes says, she saw two doorways one marked traditional painters, the other contemporary conceptual painters. She could not bear to enter the former where they seemed to be deciding only between light and dark brown. She felt she would be turned away from the latter when she admitted to painting landscapes. Today she is ready to say exactly what she does: “I am a conceptual artist who installs herself in another person’s environment and interprets what is essential about that environment. I look for what is unique

about each place – the hills, the air, the garden – and where the owners heart lies. I reflect back to the owner through my lens what I perceive” The resulting paintings, for all their abstraction, are intimate and full of feeling.

Shirley Jacks



Salt, No Salt, Vinalhaven Diptych
30"x 80" Oil on canvas, 1996



Door to the Glass Room, Islesboro
36"x 36" Oil on canvas, 1995



Andalusia Sitting Room
8"x 8" Oil on paper, 1997



Hills of Hills
8"x 8" Oil on paper, 1997



Andalusia Living Room
8"x 8" Oil on paper, 1997

CONNIE HAYES received her B.F.A. from the Maine College of Art and her M.F.A. from Tyler School of Art. She has been a visiting artist at San Francisco State University, Alfred University, and Bowdoin College, and an artist in residence at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and at the Farnsworth Museum, Maine. Her work is included in numerous collections such as Fortune Magazine and The New Yorker; ABC's Good Morning America and the Monhegan Museum, Maine. She is represented in New York by Felissimo Gallery, and in Maine by Greenhut Galleries.



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