

The background is a watercolor painting of a forest. The trees are dark, almost black, and have bare, intricate branches. A path or stream winds through the trees, rendered in shades of purple, pink, and blue. The lower half of the image shows a reflection of the trees and path in a body of water, painted in various shades of blue and green. The overall style is soft and painterly.

Marine Contemporary

016

Stephanie Pryor
New Work



Essay

Shana Nys Dambrot

*Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

– Robert Frost

Stephanie Pryor has arrived at a place in her newest paintings from which she might well go in any of several diverging directions – a metaphor that’s both a little oblique and also quite direct. In sense, her persistent desire to take all available paths at one time has long defined the struggles that play out in her pictures, narrated as a contest of choreography between depiction and abstraction. Her portraiture has long captured the emotional complexities of her subjects in shapes and in palettes at least as if not more evocative than descriptive. And now, alongside her acclaimed work with the figure, a reinvigorated interest in landscape emerges as a primary subject matter – and a new path along which the ambiguous and the narrative might travel in tandem. For her part, Pryor is sanguine about the paradox. “I can only go in the direction that has to be next.”

Pryor builds her images by diluting acrylic pigment then layering and layering and layering it to generate discernible luminosity and depth between and among the myriad washes of embedded pigment. In her surfaces, she’s looking at the Nordic styles, and the Flemish Renaissance; but in her style of rendering, she looks to a certain studied mannerist naivete, an elegant Outsider gesturalism in her interpretive relationship to space and color. She deploys her pigment like motor-oil slicks in watercolor – but without that chimerical medium’s pitfalls – so that her compositions seem like assembled moments of abstraction, cobbled together into familiar imagery. In both her portraits and her landscapes, she is representing both real and psychological spaces, invoking aspects of ordinary life infused with an unnatural naturalism.

The newest landscapes are based on her personal travels, including to places from her past, so that in addition to her art-historical and formal concerns, her own memories become factors as well. The bright yellow star and prismatic colors in “Winter Wonderland” for example, strike an uncommon note of the apparently man-made (or possibly phantasmagoric) in an otherwise depopulated wooded landscape. Turns out, this strange apparition is a real thing – part of a holiday tradition in her hometown where folks concoct light installations among the trees. Even her more traditional landscapes strike a note of dream-state ambiguity, achieved, as in her portraiture, through an evocative use of color. In the new portraits, not only are the subjects’ surroundings more articulated than ever, those settings – a brick wall, a city sidewalk, a gathering crowd – get the same elaborated attention. It’s worth noting that for the first time, all the paintings are based on her own original photography rather than on found or sourced material – so that her versions of events are now increasingly tied to her own direct experience of time and emotion. “It’s not about being faithful to the pictures; they can change during the painting process.” Rather, it’s about being faithful to another kind of knowing.

Stephanie Pryor

b.1971. Great Lakes, Illinois, USA
Lives and works in Los Angeles

Pryor's layered, seductive paintings explore the line between abstraction and representation, both physically and psychologically. She has exhibited widely in the states and abroad, including solo shows at ACME, Los Angeles, CRG Gallery New York and Studio Guenzani, Milan, Italy. Stephanie has participated in numerous group shows. Some highlights include Studio International, Paintings for the Ophichus Collection, Hydra Workshop Greece, The Sensational Line, Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, and Contemporary, Cool and Collected, The Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC. Select public collections include MOCA Madison, WI, Creative Artist Agency Los Angeles and Deutchebank Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany. Her 2011 solo exhibition at Marine Contemporary was listed in Modern Painters 100 Best Fall Shows.

Education:

2000

— M.F.A, University of California,
Los Angeles, CA

1997

— Post-Baccalaureate certificate, School of the
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

1996

— Summer Program, The Slade School of
Fine Art, University College, London

1993

— B.A. Art and Art history, cum laude, with
honors, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY

1991

— Stockholm University and Filmhouse,
Stockholm Sweden

Recent Solo Exhibitions:

2011

— Domina, Marine Contemporary,
Los Angeles, CA

— 2007

ACME. At Domestic,
Los Angeles, CA

Recent Group Exhibitions include:

2012

— About Face, Curated by Daniel Weinberg,
ACME, Los Angeles, CA

2011

— Metallic, Post Gallery,
Los Angeles, CA
— Chain Letter, Shoshana Wayne Gallery,
Santa Monica, CA

2010

— Marine Salon No. 5,
Santa Monica, CA (catalog)

2009

— Curator's Choice Recent Acquisitions
from MMoCA's Collection.
Madison, WI

2008

— Scene/Seen Recent Aquisitions from the
Luckman Fine Arts Permanent Collection
1979-2006, Cal State, Los Angeles

2007

— Contemporary Cool and Collected,
The Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, NC



Ryerson
Acrylic on panel,
47.5" x 84", 2013



Nantahala Rain
Acrylic on panel,
38" x 74", 2013

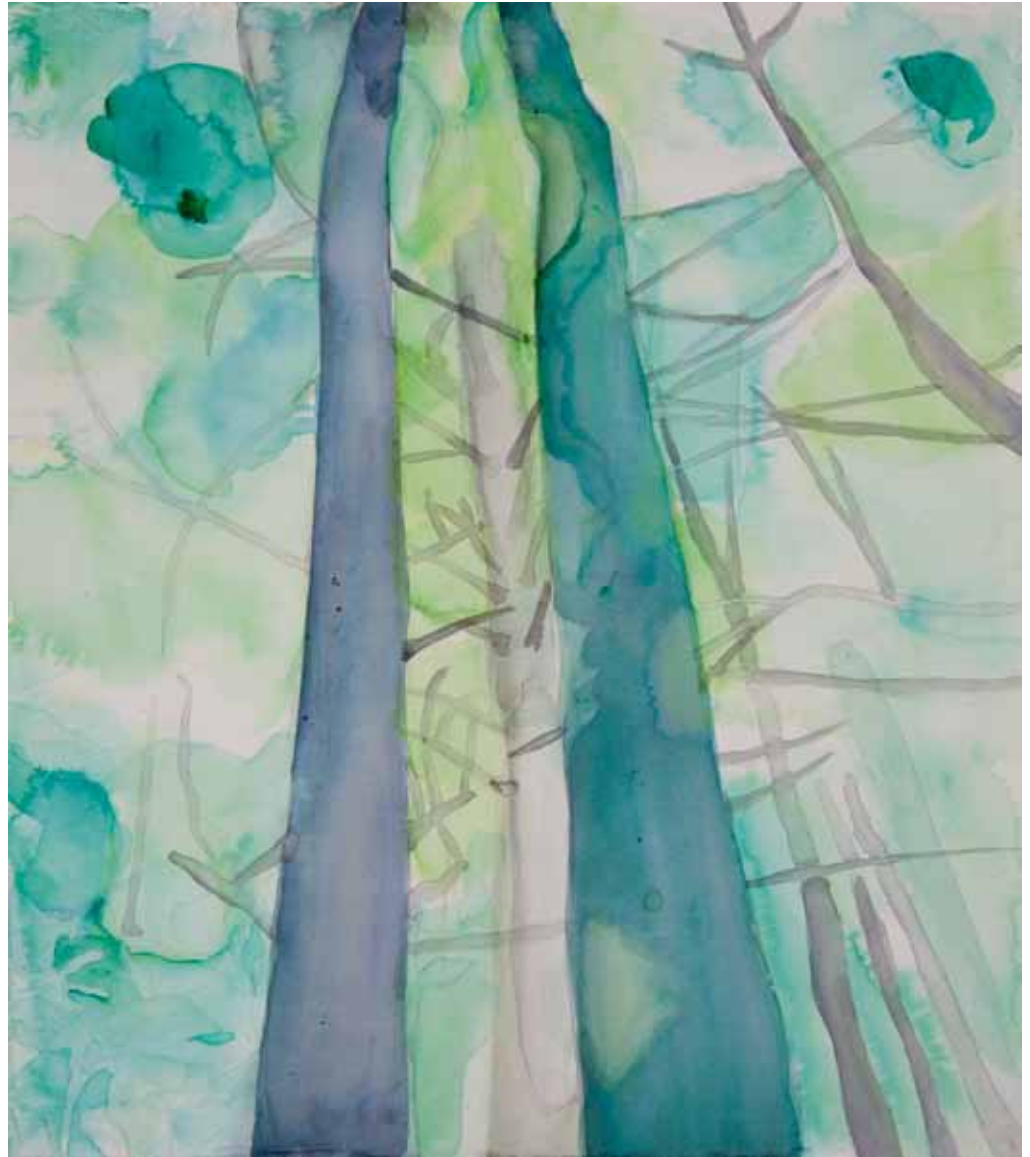
Winter Wonderland
Acrylic on panel,
60" x 40", 2013



Highlands Spring
Acrylic on panel,
60" x 40", 2013



Blue Gorge
Acrylic on panel,
10.25" x 9", 2013





Wadsworth Lent
Acrylic on panel,
12" x 16", 2013



Christmas Party ,
Acrylic, glitter and metallic
paper on canvas over panel,
12" x 18" 2013



Old School Road (detail)

Old School Road
Acrylic, cut paper
and glitter on panel,
18" x 14", 2013



Procession
Acrylic, metallic paper
and glitter on canvas,
48" x 48", 2013



Sunset
Acrylic, metallic paper
and glitter on canvas
58.5" x 32", 2013





Headliners
Acrylic, glitter and cut
metallic paper on canvas,
60" x 84", 2013





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