



Summer, 2008, oil on canvas, 48 x 48 in



Harms Studio, 2009
photo: Laurie Lambrecht

ROBERT HARMS Paintings & Watercolors

From May 22 through June 22, 2009, The Drawing Room in East Hampton is pleased to present an exhibition of abstract oil paintings and related watercolors by longtime South Fork resident Robert Harms. Painted in the artist's pond-front Southampton studio over the past year, each canvas evokes a distinct aspect of the shifting natural views and evanescent light that filters through the large plate glass windows. A series of small watercolor renderings of branches stretched over the water's surface, tree trunks, and emerging foliage offer evidence of the artist's reliance on close observation of his surroundings. Articulating Harms' process in an introductory catalog essay, noted curator Henry Geldzahler wrote: "Robert looks hard at nature, ingests what he sees, contemplates it at length, squaring it in the process with his own temperament."

Geldzahler also noted the resonance of the East End environment for Harms, who began painting here in the early 1980s. "Born on Long Island, in Nassau County, it seems no accident that Harms has chosen to paint in the Hamptons where in the nineteenth century John Kensett, and more recently Fairfield Porter and Willem de Kooning, have continued their exploration of the continuum between nature and art."

Harms descends from the tradition of action painting and also holds a deep appreciation for early 20th century masters of the American landscape. Rather than conveying literal representations of specific landscapes, however, the power of Harms' canvases rests in their potential to suggest familiar natural spaces and conditions that spark personal memories in the individual viewer. In an airy abstraction titled *January 1*, a curtain of luminous calligraphic strokes silhouetted against the gesso white canvas, invokes a sense of cool winter light refracted through moist air rising off the pond. By contrast, the sweeping horizontal gestures of blue, green, and violet hues in *Summer* suggest languorous heat hovering over water lilies at the peak of summer. In each painting, Harms captures a fleeting facet of our world, heightened by the flickering marks that comprise his formal vocabulary.

Harms attended The School of Visual Arts in New York City and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. He is the recipient of awards from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and the National Arts Club, and his work is in the permanent collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Parrish Art Museum.

Hours: Monday & Thursday through Saturday, 11–5, Sunday 11-4.