

JENNIFER BARTLETT

Amagansett Drawings

From August 16 through September 30, 2007 The Drawing Room in East Hampton is pleased to present *Jennifer Bartlett: Amagansett Drawings*, an exhibition of recent pastels that capture views of the artist's wetlands garden over the course of a year, highlighting the changing conditions and shifting moods of fall, winter, spring and early summer.

The fifteen pastels that comprise this powerful body of work reveal Bartlett's command of her medium and her longstanding interest in, and keen appreciation for gardens as both physical and psychological refuge. Mining the intimate subject of a familiar place for repose with a focal point on two Adirondack chairs that at times seem to substitute for human protagonists, Bartlett has created drawings that evoke poignant emotions, and in some cases mystical forces.

Bartlett's choice to work with the distinctive square format (on 30 x 30 inch sheets) is ideally suited to her vocabulary of pastel techniques that range from broad, gestural and frenzied swirls of color to more intricate, staccato drawing of bare branches and tall dry grasses that highlight the rich layering of pigment built up over time. A combination of close observation paired with a willingness to explore unconscious forces brings to mind the equally mysterious pastel landscapes of Odillon Redon and Marsden Hartley.

The series begins with autumnal views of the garden grounded by a rich earthy palette, and proceeds to reveal swirling white gusts in winter skies hovering over compressed space of the background. A midnight blue night sky silhouettes the barely visible chairs in one drawing, and in a misty, diffuse composition the landscape all but disappears into a haze of marks, with a central stone path as the viewer's sole guide. In *Amagansett, April*, clarity returns as pools of blue water contrast the not yet green grasses and the reaching architecture of bare branches. The six most recent works, made in spring and early summer, reach a crescendo of chartreuse juxtaposed with darker greens that define deep space. In the final pastel, Bartlett's eye telescopes in for a close up of the solitary chairs, the concise conclusion to her extensive study of place.

It is a privilege to experience the evolution of Bartlett's engagement with both the process of observation and rendering of her changing subject. Bartlett extracts from her subject and delivers to the viewer, a full spectrum of emotional states. We experience the cool light of late autumn, the lonely darkness and grey sky of winter, and the beaming potential of summer foliage. Throughout her career, Bartlett has moved deftly in and out of representational imagery, bringing the best of her conceptual roots to bear in works that are not limited by a single ideology. Perhaps this is what makes these drawings so rigorous and unexpected.

Born in California, Bartlett divides her time between New York and Amagansett. She received her BA from Mills College and both BFA and MFA degrees from Yale University. Her work is included in numerous public institutions including The Brooklyn Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The Museum of Modern Art, The Tate Gallery, London and The Whitney Museum of American Art.

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