

Elizabeth Higgins



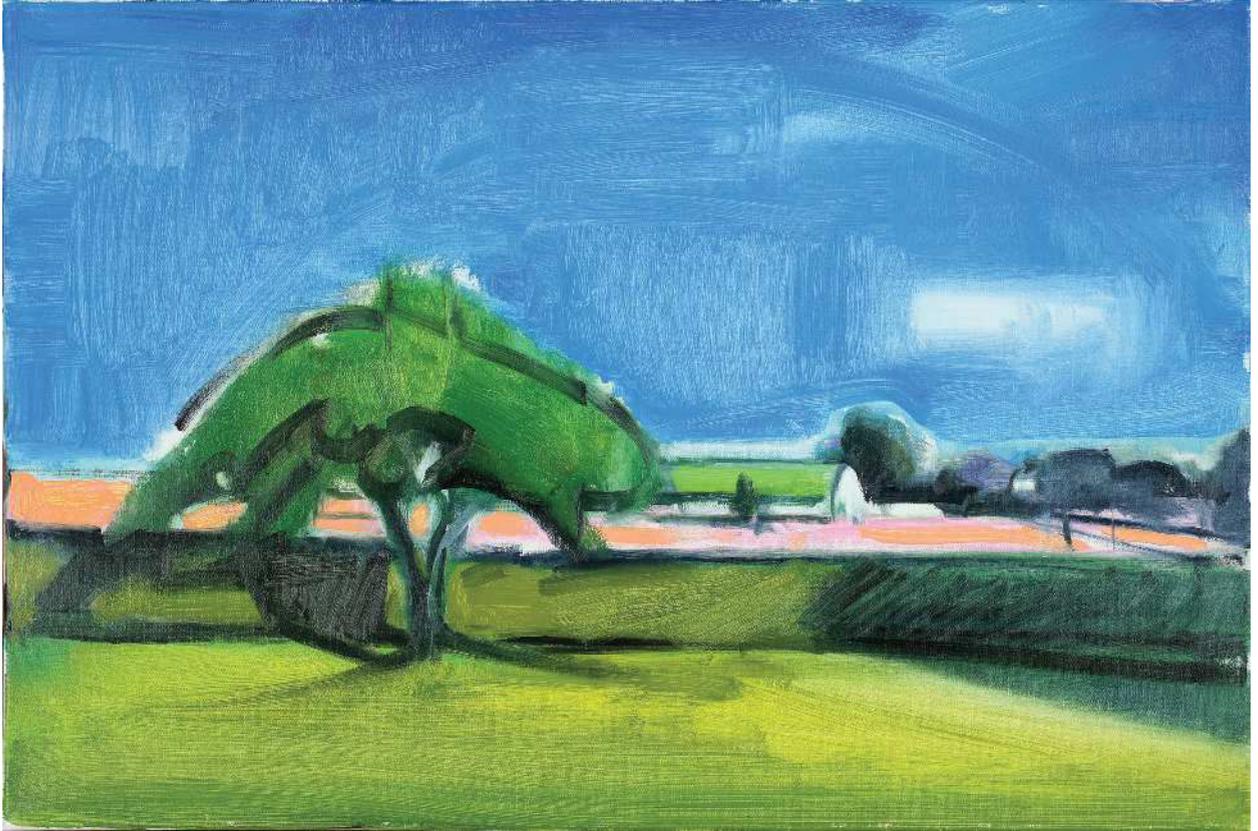
Elizabeth Higgins

Paintings

Essay by John Goodrich

Prince Street Gallery

New York



1. "Apple Tree and Flower Farm" 2016, oil on canvas, 30 x 20 inches

Truth Be Told

By John Goodrich

PAINTING IS, AT HEART, A KIND OF STORYTELLING. But it is also a visual art, which means that it recounts the appearances of things: how objects respond to a particular light, how they occupy space, how they relate to our own point of view. Early on, every painter learns that visual perception is a complex and subjective process, and recording one's impressions more complicated still. And, as great painters from Duccio to Chardin to Picasso have demonstrated, the ultimate truthfulness of a painting lies not in rote duplications of nature but in the intuitive intersection between three-dimensional observation and two-dimensional depiction—that is, in the life of forms on a surface.

Elizabeth Higgins is well familiar with the formal powers of painting, having studied with the likes of Leland Bell, Paul Resika, Albert Kresch and Robert de Niro, Sr. Her recent work covers a range of motifs—interior scenes, figures studies, and especially landscapes of Connecticut, Denmark, Ireland and Ontario, Canada—and connecting them all is a sense of how colors locate and characterize objects. "Apple Tree and Flower Farm" (2016), for instance, tells a story of flamboyant horizontals: the yellowy, sunlit radiance of foreground grass, the elusive yellow-green of

a distant roof, and—pressurizing the space in-between—the dense olive hues of a long, low-lying hedge. Pressing the hedge from behind, the intense pinks and oranges of a sun-splashed field stretch into the depths, even as they're compressed into a mere inch or so of canvas-height. How to do justice to a large slice of nature on a smallish canvas? This painting shows a way: one orders one's perceptions, feelingly, and finds their equivalents, candidly.

And, life being as big and complex as it is, there's more to this painting: the remote, rectangular cloud sounding a faint reprise to the horizontals, and the foreground tree—really the main event—that rises through them all, spreading buoyantly above, its canopy curling under the weight of light. In this compelling recapitulation of a scene, colors enlarge the gestures of objects, conveying not just their existence, but even their personalities—how they exist.

The larger painting "Woman at Window" (2016) re-creates a wholly different motif with different means. Recalling certain compositions of Bonnard and Matisse, this canvas places a figure in a zone dividing exterior and interior worlds. Walls of dark fuchsia hues bracket the window, enclosing in the painting's lower portion the purplish-grays of a couch, locating it tangibly below our point

of view. The couch encloses, in turn, the form of a seated woman. The collective effect of these elements is of an intimate, light-absorbing world, their movements culminating in the deep orange notes of the figure's head. Indeed, the face, rising just above the couch, becomes the painting's fulcrum – the last, small point of resistance to the flood of layered lemon-yellows, greens, and ochres. Beyond the trees glimmers the distant white of a house, almost equal in size to the figure's face; a seemingly vast journey, across multiple color-shapes, connects the two.

Some of the artist's other large paintings, such as "Violet, Blue and Green" (2016) and "After Storm" (2016) evoke the all-over, enveloping space of Abstract-Expressionism, locating small objects—farm buildings and boats, respectively—within pulsing fields of color. In the very horizontal "Copenhagen Night" (2016)—a veritable paean to the light of dusk—a band of dark buildings, paced by steeples and a single dome, settles heavily but luminously between the spreading sheen of water and the bright pinks of sky. "Carpe Diem" (2015) explores more Mondrianesque rhythms, with a single yellowish-white building condensing

at the center, and notes of trees and boats measuring out the elasticized space on all sides.

Strong colorists are often minimalists as draftsmen, but Elizabeth Higgins' black-and-white monotypes remind us how even "simple" forms can resonate complexly. The straight-forward style of the prints belies an intensity and intricacy of observation that make them feel far larger than their actual dimensions. The strong, spare tones and outlines of "Standing Nude" (2015), for example, convincingly capture a very specific event—a figure's physical resistance to gravity—within the richly atmospheric light of a studio.

In both the artist's prints and the paintings, the limiting rectangle of paper or canvas becomes, paradoxically, a means of amplifying gestures, of giving measure and resolution of their journeys across the surface. It's these movements and intervals, rather than the labeling effect of details, that ultimately define her subjects, and that in fact uniquely characterize them. There are many kinds of stories to be told, but these are the truths that only art can tell, in a visual language that Elizabeth Higgins clearly speaks.



2. "Woman at Window" 2016, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches



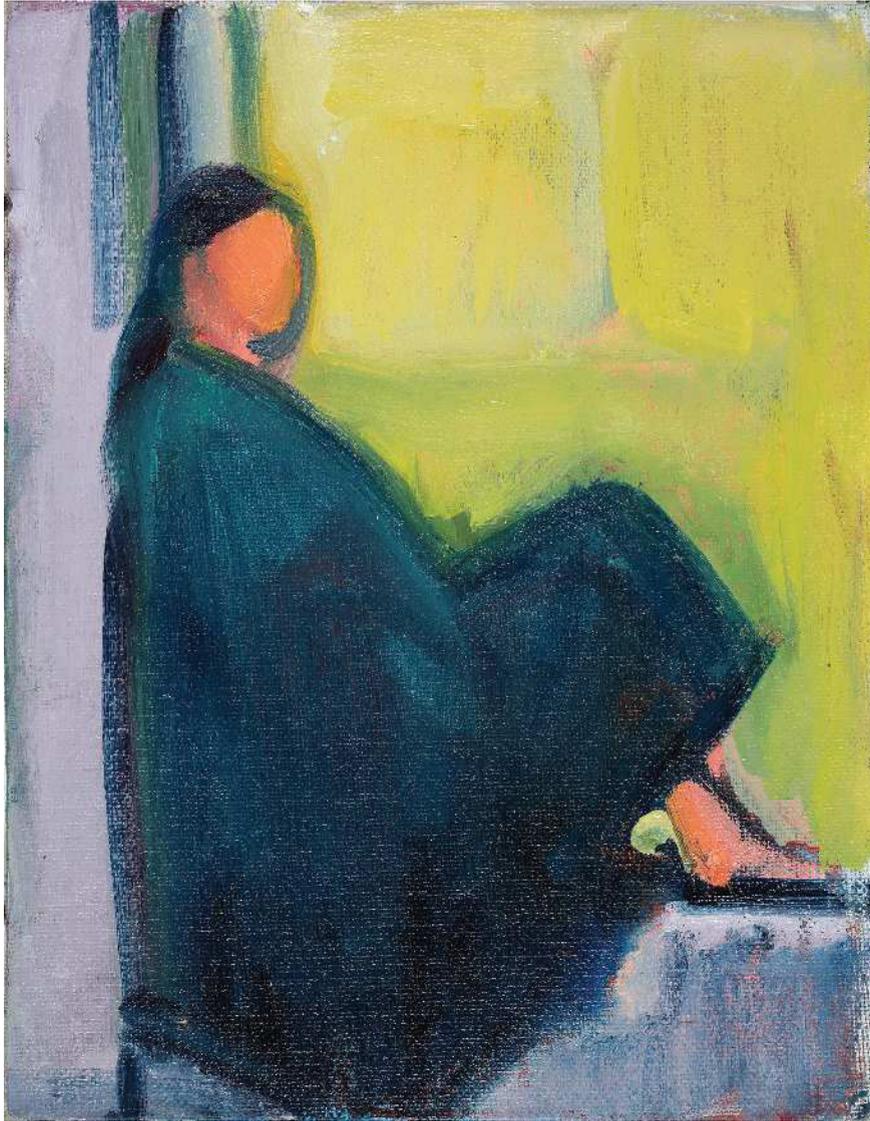
3. "After Storm" 2016, oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches



4. "Copenhagen Night" 2016, oil on canvas, 48 x 24 inches



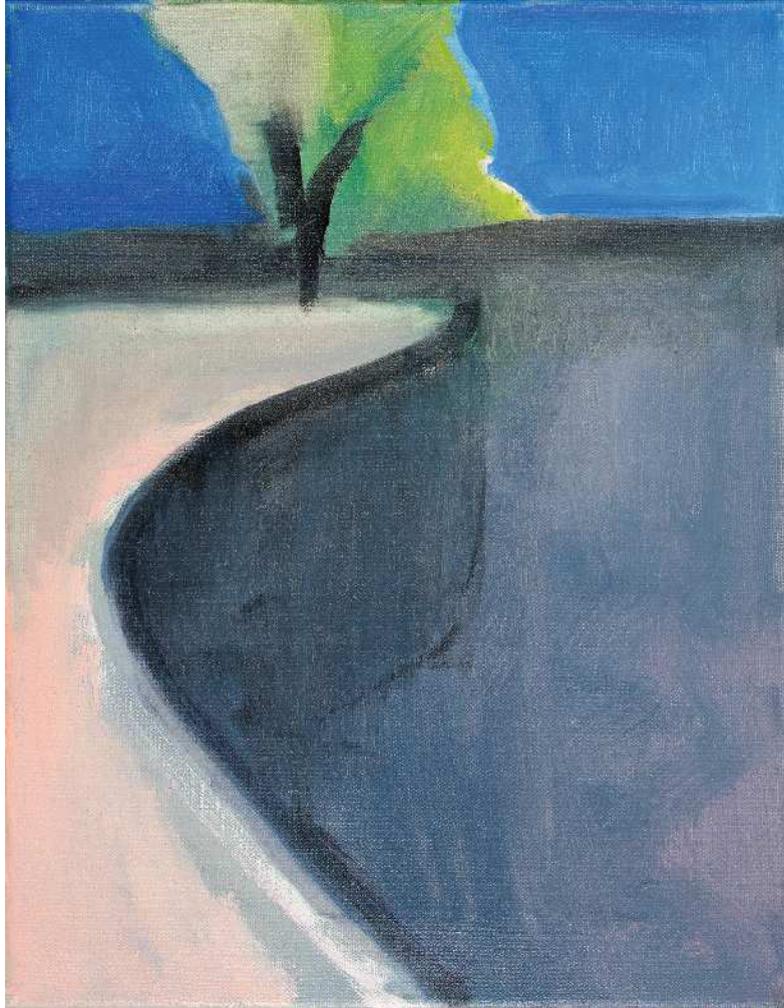
5. "Carpe Diem #2" 2015, oil on canvas, 20 x 10 inches



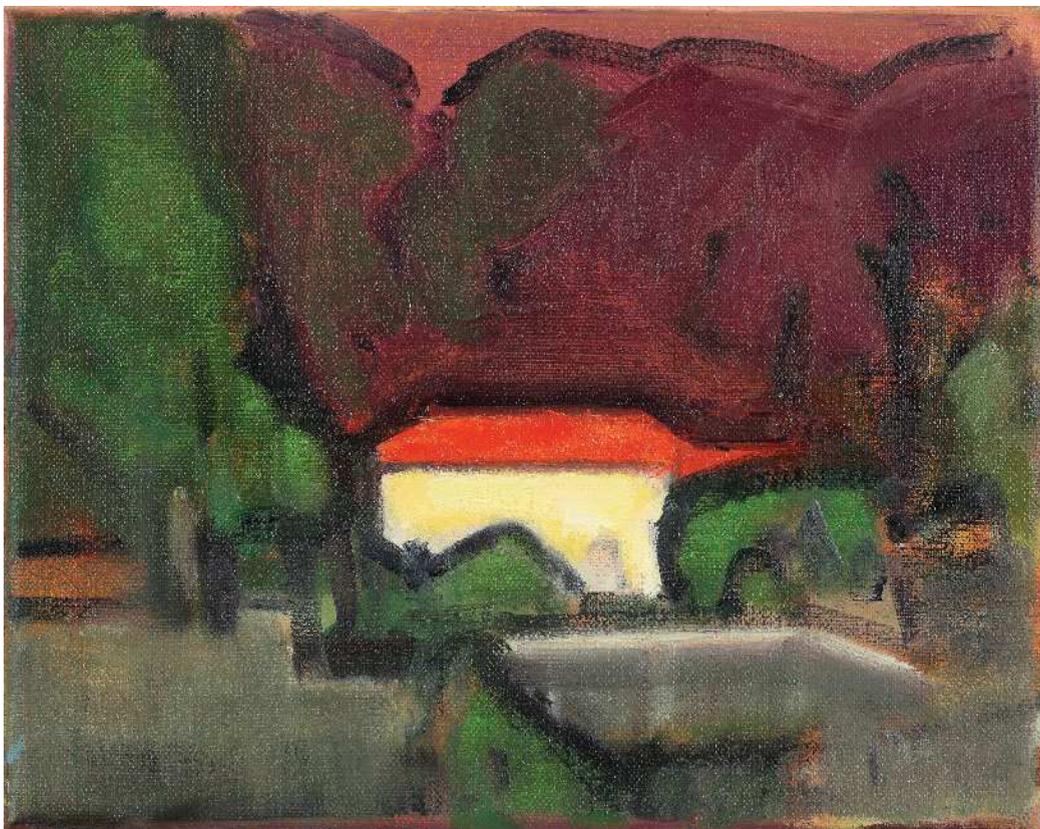
6. "Woman in Yellow Light" 2015, oil on canvas board, 7 x 9 inches



7. "Winter Sound" 2015, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



8. "Blue Sky, Pink Shore" 2016, oil on canvas



9. "House Across the Pond" 2015, oil on linen, 10 x 8 inches



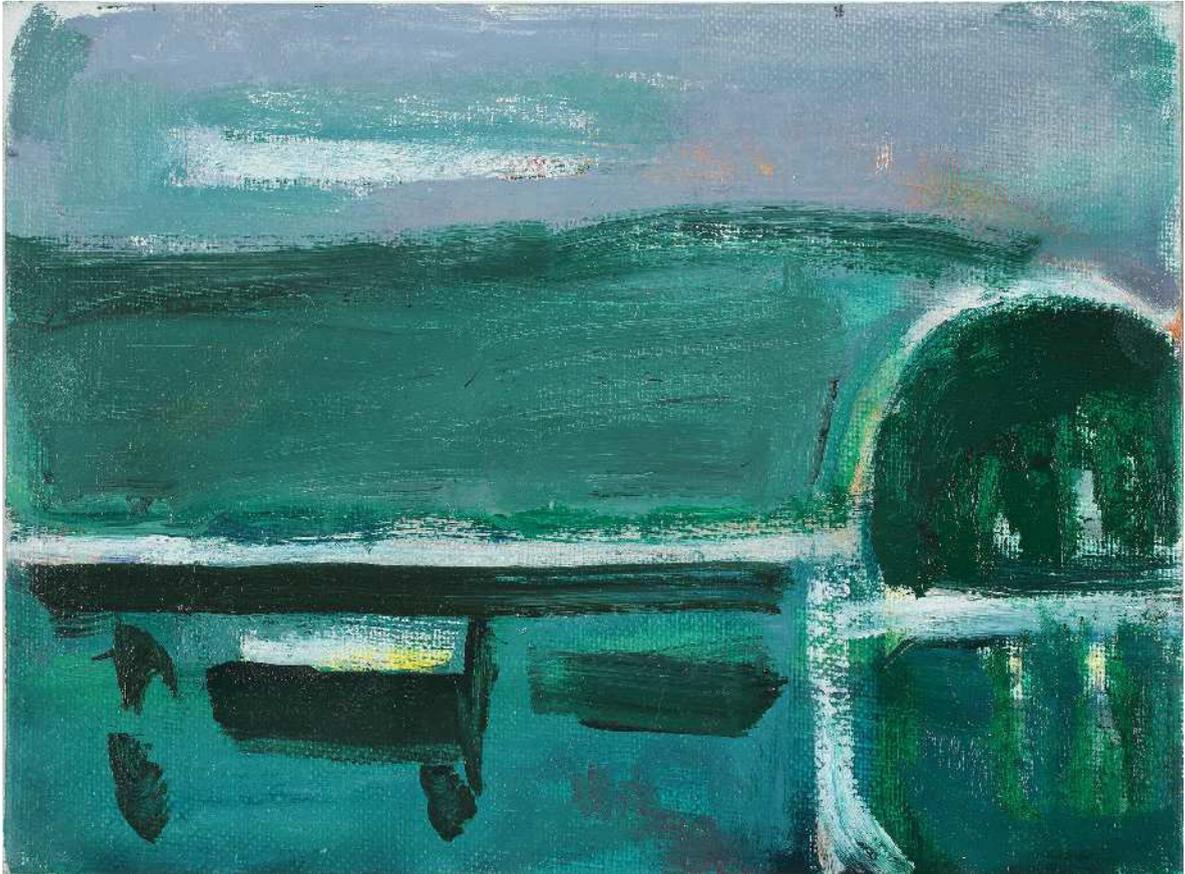
10. "Tunk Lake" 2016, oil on linen, 8 x 6 inches



11. "Storm Approaching" 2015, oil on canvas, 24 x 30



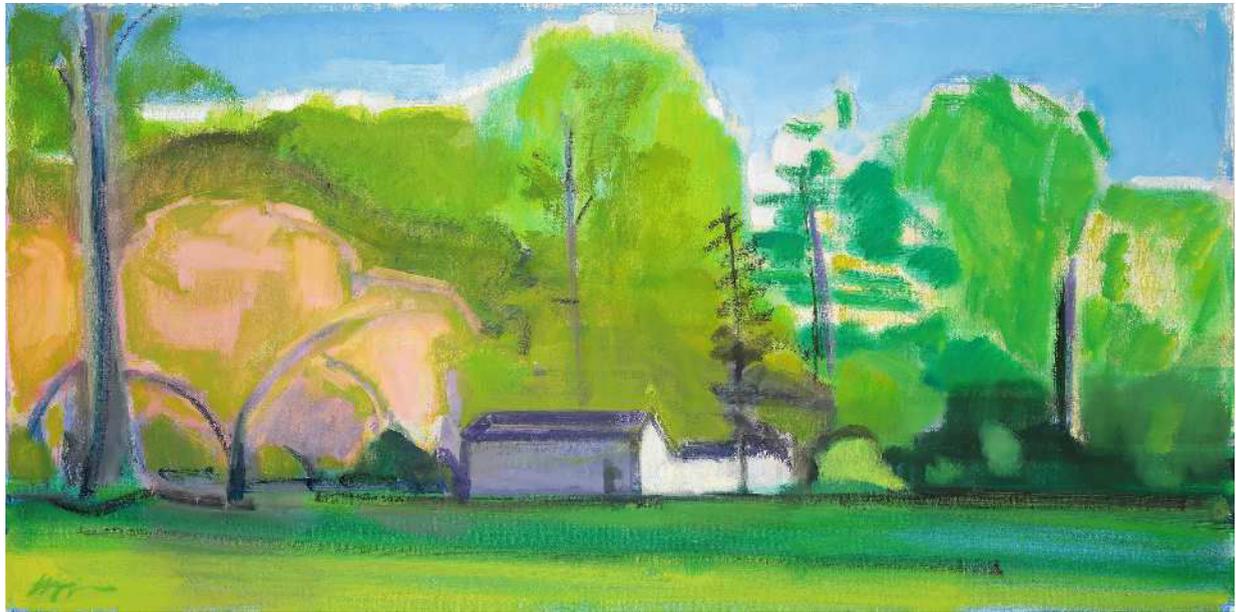
12. "Evening Sky - Beaumaris" 2016, oil on linen board, 8 x 8 inches



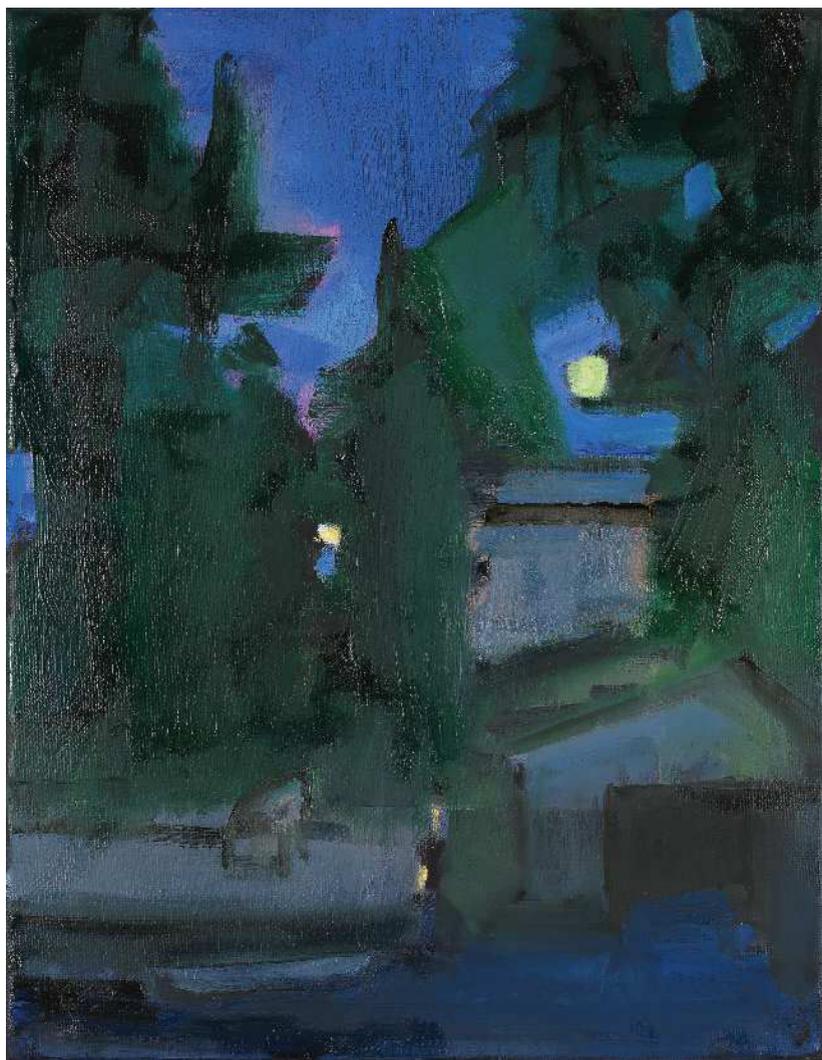
"Calm Water" 2016 oil on canvas 4 x 6 inches



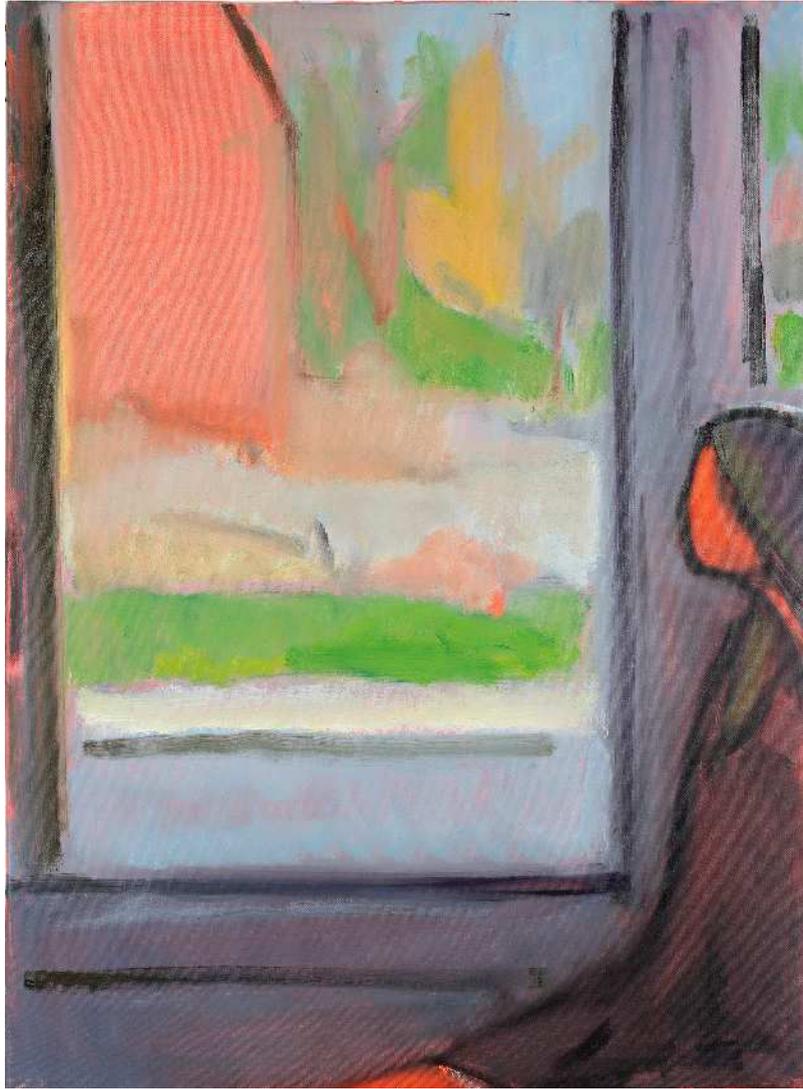
"Beaumaris Sky" 2015 oil on linen 30 x 40 inches



"Summer" 2015 oil on canvas 24 x 48 inches



"Night Sky" oil on canvas 11 x 14 inches



"Woman at Window with Red House" oil on canvas 20 x 30 inches



"Two Houses" 2014 oil on canvas 10 x 8 inches



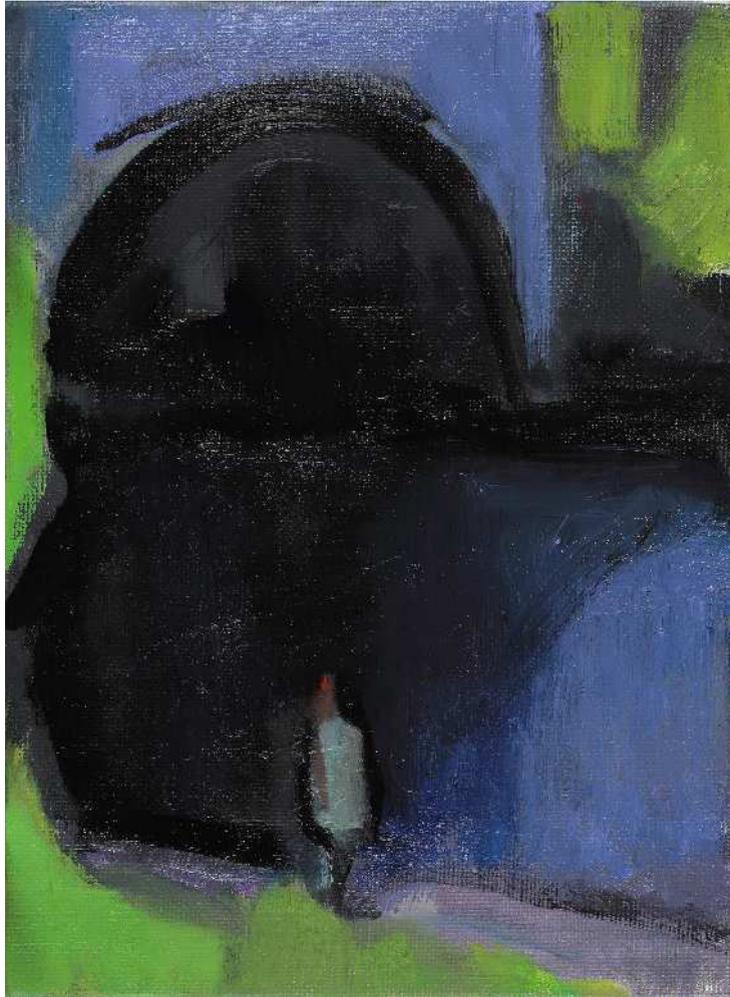
"Summer Storm" 2015 oil on canvas 10 x 8 inches



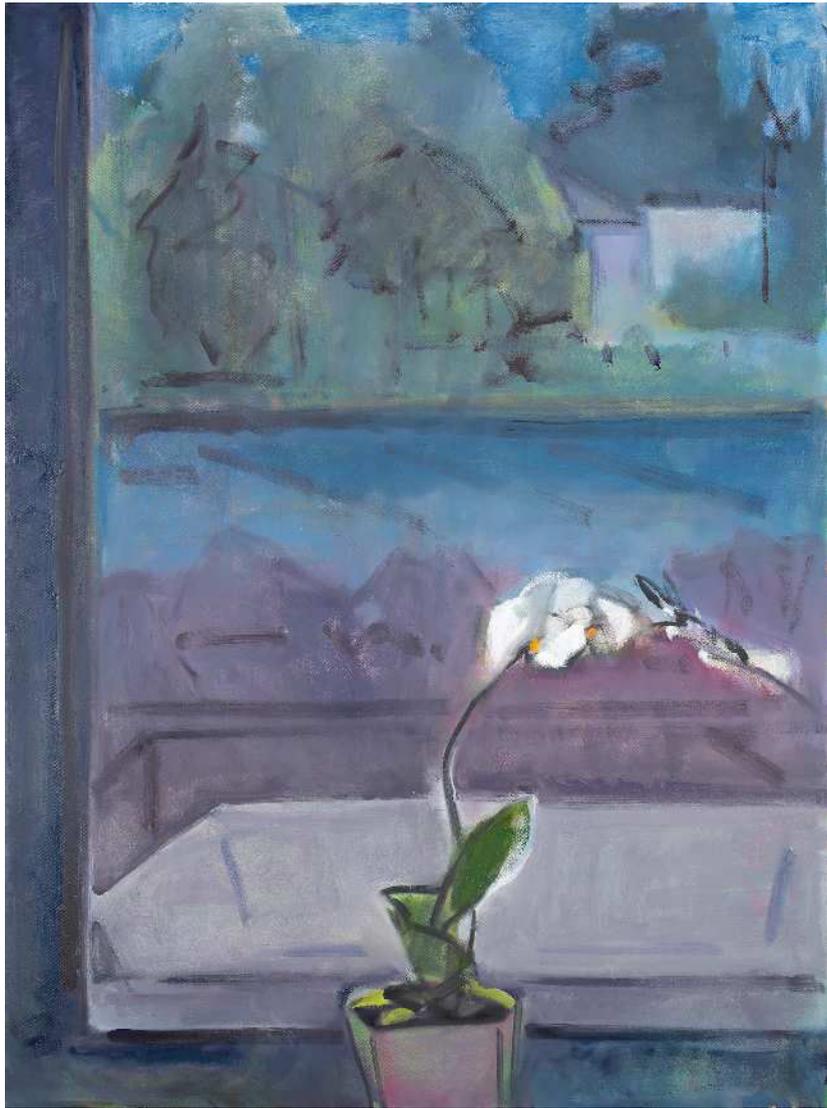
"Danish Landscape" 2015 oil on canvas 12 x 6 inches



"Tree" oil on canvas board 8 x 6 inches



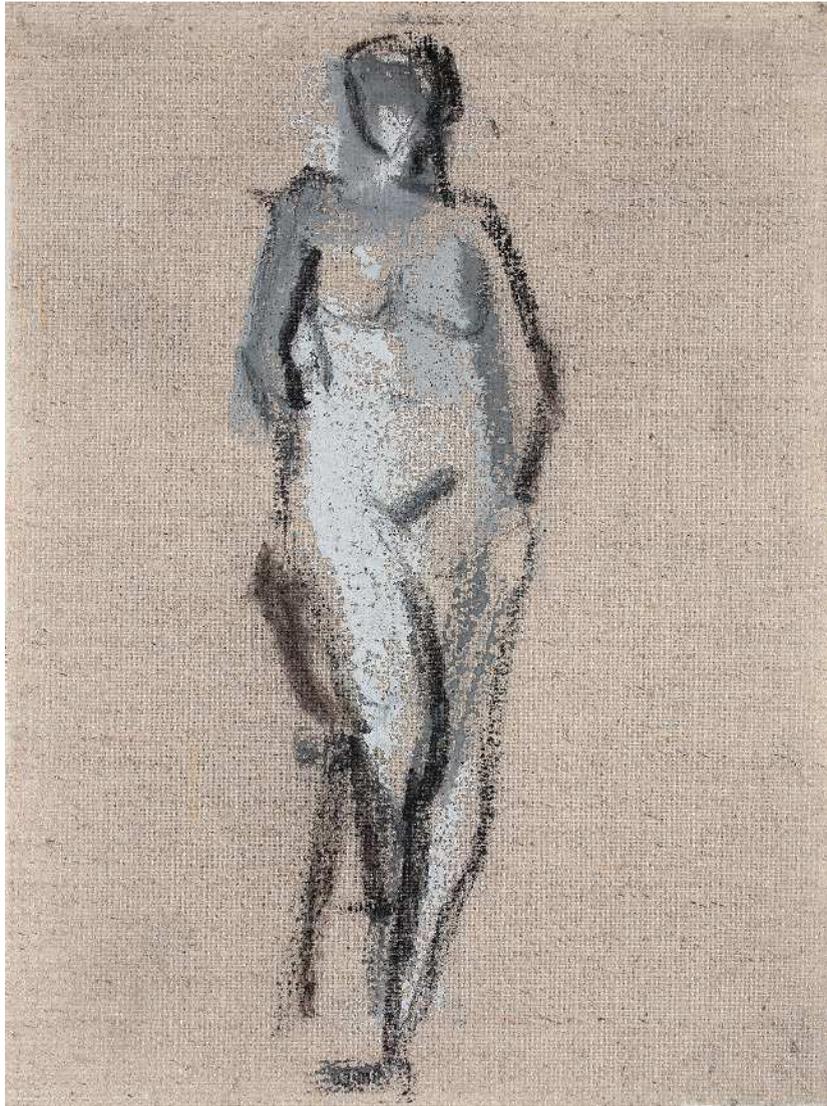
"Solitude" 2016 oil on canvas 6 x 8 inches



"Orchid" 2016 oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches



"Calm Water" 2016 monotype 6 x 8 inches



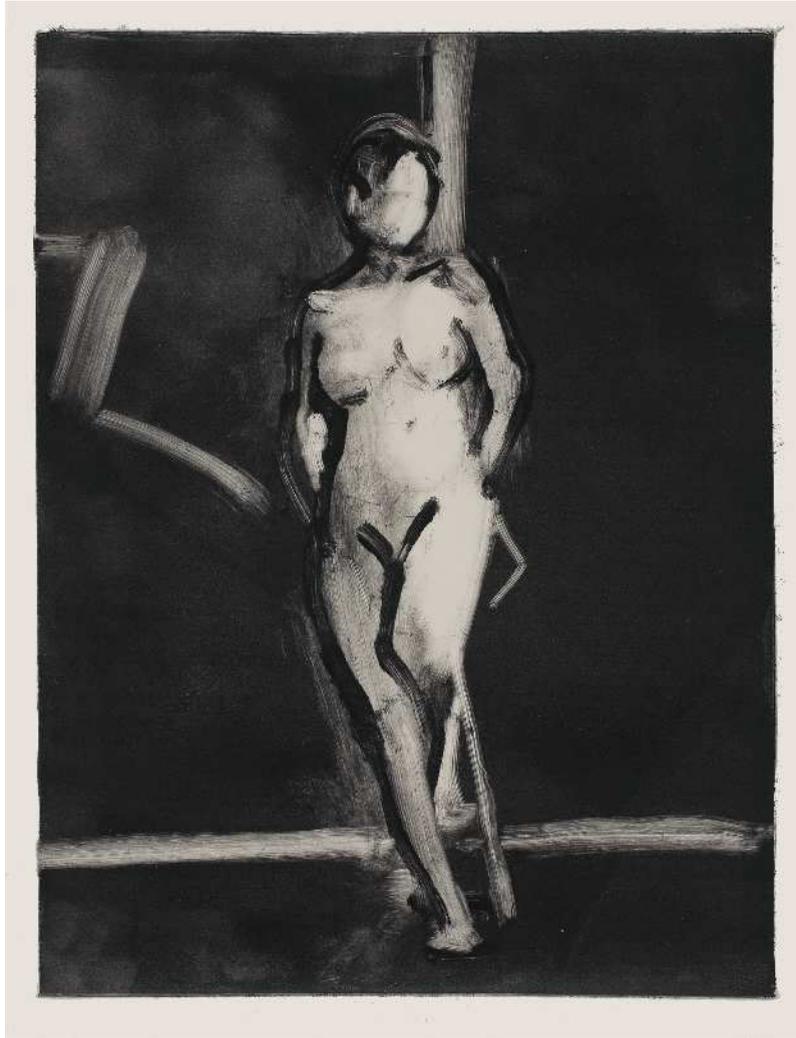
"Standing Nude" 2015 goache and charcoal on linen 6 x 8 inches



"Seated Nude" 2015 monotype 8 x 8 inches



"Seated Nude" 2015 Monotype 16 x 20 inches



"Standing Nude" 2015 Monotype 6 x 8 inches



"Seated Woman" 2015 monotype 16 x 20 inches

This catalogue accompanies an exhibition
from May 24 to June 18, 2016 at the
Prince Street Gallery
© Elizabeth Higgins, 2016



"Standing Nude" 2015, monotype, 6 x 8 inches

Front cover: "Violet, Blue and Green" (detail) 2016, oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches

Elizabeth Higgins

Born: Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 1960

Education: 1983 - 85

M.F.A. Degree earned in Painting

- Parson's School of Design, New York City
Studied with Paul Resika, John Heliker, Leland Bell and Robert DeNiro.
- 1982 - 83 The Banff School of Fine Art, Banff, Alberta, Canada
Studied with Takao Tanabe.
- 1979 - 83 B.F.A. Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada
Studied with J.C. Heywood, Ralph Allen and David Andrew.
- 1980 Venice, Italy — "Italian Renaissance and Baroque Art and Architecture".

Selected Exhibitions: Solo

- 2016 Prince Street Gallery, New York City
- 1994 Prince Street Gallery, New York City
- 1991 Prince Street Gallery, New York City
- 1990 Nancy Poole's Studio, Toronto, Canada
- 1989 Nancy Poole's Studio, Toronto, Canada
- 1987 Prince Street Gallery, New York City

Selected Exhibitions: Group

- 2015 "Monothon 2015" Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Norwalk, CT.
"Summer – Gallery Artists", Prince Street Gallery, New York City
- 2014 "Monothon 2014" - CCFP
Avenue Gallery, Norwalk, CT
- 2011 "Large Works", Prince Street Gallery, New York City
- 2010 "Continuing Views", Prince Street Gallery, New York City
- 2008 "The New Six", Prince Street Gallery, NYC
Spectrum 2008 Annual Juried Exhibition,
Carriage Barn Arts Center, New Canaan, CT
- 2007 Darien Library at DCA
- 1994 Spectrum 1994, New Canaan, CT
- 1994 Mangel Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
- 1993 "Gallery Artists", Prince Street Gallery, New York City,
- 1991 "20th Anniversary", Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 1990 Nancy Poole's Studio, Toronto, Canada
Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 1989 Ingber Gallery, New York City, "Young Masters II"
Prince Street Gallery New York City, "the Landscape"

- 1988 Ingber Gallery, New York City, "Young Masters"
Addison/Ripley Gallery, Washington, D.C., "Gallery Artists"
Prince Street, Gallery, New York City
- 1987 DeBello Gallery, Toronto, Canada, "Juried Small Works"
AWNY Juried Exhibition", New York City,
(juried by Patterson Sims, Associate Curator,
Whitney Museum and Holly Solomon,
Holly Solomon Gallery, New York City)
Prince Street Gallery, New York City, "Gallery Artists"
- 1986 College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA,
"Still Life Invitational"
Ward - Nasse Gallery, New York City, "Annual Group Show"
Prince Street Gallery, "Gallery Artists"
- 1984 University Art Association, "East Coast Painters"
(two year traveling juried Museum exhibition)
Parson's School of Art and Design,
"Graduate Thesis Exhibition", New York City
- 1983 Agnes Etherington Art Centre, "Painters on View",
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
Toronto Annual Outdoor Exhibition, Toronto, Canada
- 1982 Ontario Society of Artists Annual Juried Exhibition,
"Image 82", Oakville Centennial Gallery, Oakville, Canada.

Awards:

- The Helena Rubenstein Scholarship Award,
Parson's School of Design, 1983-85
"Ten Young Canadian Artist's Award",
The Banff School of Fine Art, Banff, Alberta, 1983
Residency Award at the Banff School of Fine Art,
Banff, Alberta, 1982

Bibliography:

- "Young Painters at Ingber" Art World Magazine,
February 18, 1988
Wepman Dennis, "Elizabeth Higgins at the
Prince Street Gallery", Manhattan Arts, December 1987

Selected Collections:

- University of Toronto, Canada
Connor Clark Company, Ltd.
Arthur Anderson & Company
First Choice Canadian Communications Corporation
VIA RAIL Canada