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AMERICAN  
*art*  
COLLECTOR



*Also Showcasing  
Glass, Ceramics & Wood*

ELIZABETH O'REILLY

# Light and illumination



1



2

In Elizabeth O'Reilly's *Picnic Table and Cabin*, the New York artist paints a seaside cottage with tall trees rising from the far background and the shadows of unseen trees raking across the cottage's wooden exterior—it's as if nature was embracing this subject from all sides. And in the cracks of that embrace, light streams into the composition.

"I'm mostly interested in light and illumination," she says. "I love this idea of light at different times and places, and what happens to light as it passes through the foliage of the trees, and what happens in the shadows—how the edges are crisper when the objects making the shadows are close, but as they get farther away the shadows gets diffused and the colors of the shadows change. This kind of light is an intriguing subject."

O'Reilly, who maintains a studio in Long Island and Brooklyn, New York, spent time painting in Maine in preparation for her upcoming show, opening October 13

at George Billis Gallery in New York City. Some of her new works were inspired by the seaside inn where she painted *Picnic Table and Cabin*, as well as *Lawn Chairs and BBQ at Cabin* and *Dappled Morning*. Her paintings play the role of passing pedestrian within her scenes: they gaze at her unique compositions with an eye-level perspective, her moods are quiet and peaceful, and the views are fascinatingly modest examinations of structure and design.

"I painted the cabin in Maine from every side," she says. "Finding a spot is always kind of hard, but then you find a good one and it just works perfectly. Then you can take a couple of steps away and then all of the sudden you have another image."

She's noticed she rarely paints doors, and almost exclusively paints windows, an element to her works she discovered only after it had been trending within her compositions—"I found it in retrospect," she adds. She leaves the symbolism of that

1  
*Tree of Heaven, Union St. Bridge*, oil on panel, 20 x 10"

2  
*Lawn Chairs and BBQ at Cabin*, oil on panel, 15 x 20"

3  
*Lilacs at Union*, oil on panel, 15 x 18"

4  
*Picnic Table and Cabin*, oil on panel, 12 x 15"





3



4

windows-only motif to her viewers, and lets them assign meaning to it however they wish.

O'Reilly, who was born in Ireland and came to the United States in the 1980s, also frequently paints in areas of the gentrifying Gowanus Canal area of Brooklyn. It's here where she was inspired by a tree growing from the cement of the canal's banks for *Tree of Heaven, Union St. Bridge*. The resilient tree is the same species used as the inspiration for the classic novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by novelist Betty Smith. In O'Reilly's tall and narrow painting, she depicts the canal, a railed bridge and the tree breaking free from the city that surrounds it.

"I felt that when I painted the canal, nature was always encroaching. So I painted the juxtaposition of industry and the natural world, water and concrete, weeds and metal," she says. "Nature is everywhere." ●