

Elizabeth Higgins
New Monotypes

MAY 2-31, 2024



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GEORGE BILLIS GALLERY · 527 W 23RD ST, NEW YORK, NY

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in conjunction with:

Elizabeth Higgins
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May 2-31, 2024

George Billis Gallery
527 West 23rd Street
New York, NY 10011
212-645-2621
www.georgebillis.com

Photography: Chi Leung
Catalog design: John Goodrich



In loving memory of my son, William Jones (1991-2018)

OPPOSITE:

William
2020, watercolor, 8 x 8 in.

FRONT COVER:

Moonlight on Water #2 (detail)
2023, monotype, 10 x 8 in.

INSIDE FRONT COVER:

Still Life with Hibiscus (detail)
2020, monotype, 14 x 11 in.



Woman at Open Window
2024, monotype, 12 x 9 in.

An Exuberant Wholeness

Why do many painters spend so much time in the printmaking studio? Many, no doubt, seek to broaden their expressive range, and engage new audiences. But another reason lies in the sheer work-a-day claims on an artist's life; because painting and printmaking demand such different rhythms of effort, each becomes a welcome respite from the other.

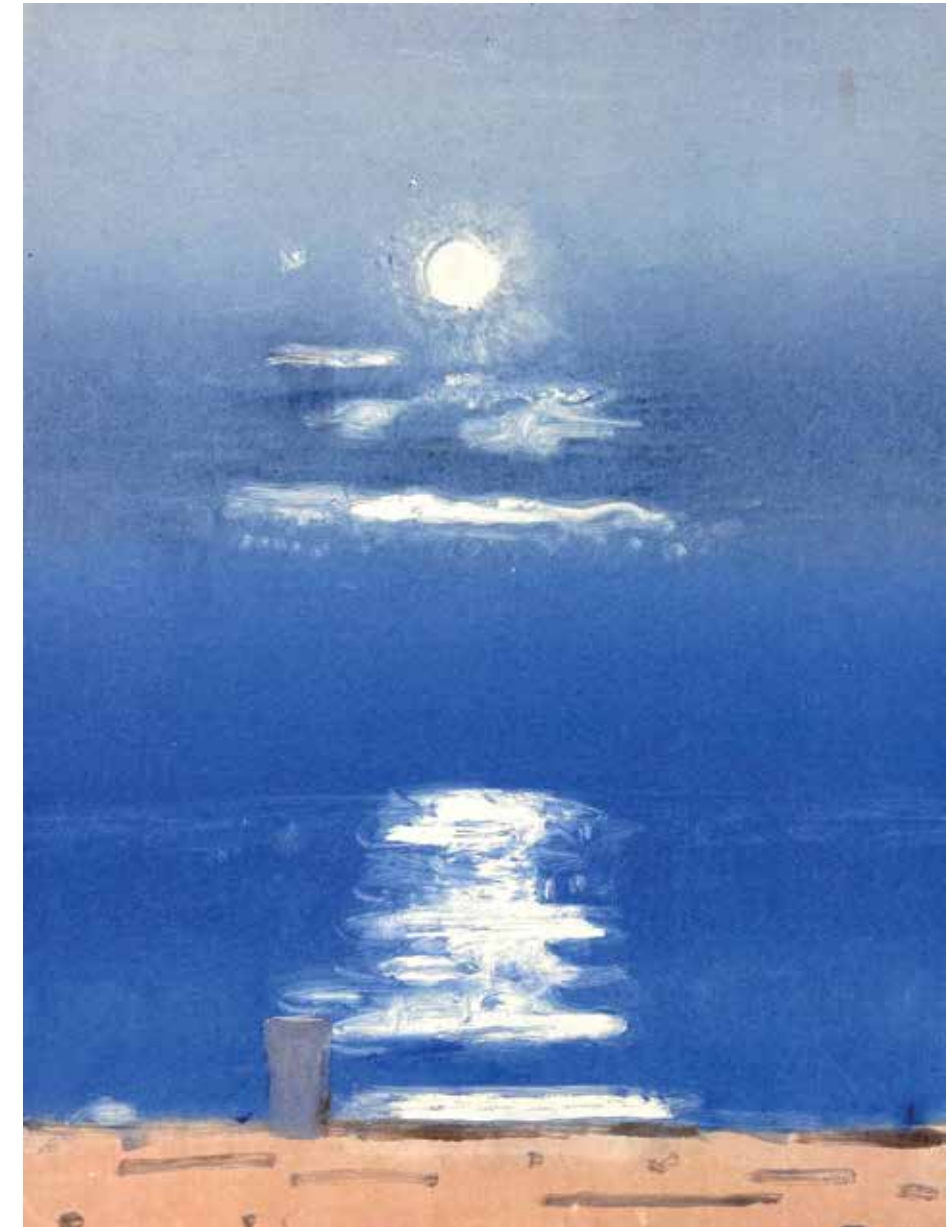
Standing before an easel, a painter lives in the moment. With any luck, the painting gathers with the speed of pictorial thinking; any of it can be changed in a moment, and it can either coalesce or collapse. The challenge is to sustain, and render coherent, the stream of insights and impulses. Printmaking demands no less energy and discipline, but planning, patience, and the postponing of gratification hold sway. Inspiration can take a breather now and then; it can rest and recoup during the labor-intensive interludes—

often satisfying in themselves—of carving woodblocks, inking plates, or pulling prints.

Elizabeth Higgins has been both painter and printmaker since the early 1980s. In the summers of 1981 and '82, she apprenticed under the eminent Canadian printmaker J.C. Heywood while earning a BFA from Queens University in Canada. However, it was her subsequent studies at the Parsons School of Design in New York City, where she received her MFA, that proved the most transformative for her life as a painter. At Parsons, her teachers Leland Bell, Robert DeNiro, Sr., Albert Kresch, John Heliker, Stanly Lewis and Paul Resika extolled the virtues of Modernism, and the School of Paris in particular. Their influence can be felt in the broad, abstracted planes and heightened color that inform all of Higgins' paintings, whether of landscapes, interiors, or still lifes.

Although she has avidly pursued printmaking for decades, the artist approaches it as a painter. In a recent conversation, she confirmed she has no interest in producing editions of prints. Spontaneous, experimental effects take precedence over repeatability. Not coincidentally, she has gravitated to the least predictable printmaking medium of all, the monotype. The real-time mixing on the plate of colors, the ghost images from previous runs, the traces of wiped-off marks: all these factors make monotype the most free-form of printmaking mediums, and the most similar to painting in its unpredictability and immediacy of attack.

Absorbing the luminous prints in George Billis' exhibition, "Elizabeth Higgins: New Monotypes," one is struck, not so much by the style of her approach—abstracted representation, after all, is by now a well-worn path—but by its depth. The artist makes color articulate: she is keenly aware of how a hue's weight can animate the rhythms of a composition. At a glance, "Sunset Over Galway Bay" appears Rothko-like in its reductive stacking of zones, each



Moonlight on Water #2
2023, monotype, 24 x 18 in.



a rectangle of brushy, humming color. But Higgins' interests point in a different direction, which is to recreate a specific, identifiable light. This entails, not a duplicating of observed hues, tones and intensities, but an empathy for the visual character of pigments. Artists' colors potentially do much more than match observed colors with points on a color wheel; like musical tones, they can express buoyancy, or implacability, limpidity, insistence or elusiveness. In "Sunset Over Galway Bay," Higgins finds the kind of greenish-blue that weighs in as a broad plane of water, pressing from beyond the denser notes of the foreground shore. The clouded sky above holds back, slightly restrained in color. Sounding the biggest jolt is an escape at the canvas' top, to the bright, warm vacuum of empty sky, with the sun gleaming in one corner. Throughout, Higgins' locate, vitally and poetically, the meaning of every element within the dimensions of the print.

Like Bonnard, the artist is drawn to interior scenes, populated by a figure or two, with a window often affording an outdoor glimpse. Higgins' approach is far more elemental and planar, and yet, like Bonnard, she structures through sensations of light. In "Woman at Window #2," the force of light at play—expressed in the contrast between absorptive brownish-purplish-grays and the flash of sunlit



ABOVE:
Woman at Window #2
2024, monotype, 12 x 9 in.

OPPOSITE:
Irish Light
2023, monotype, 18 x 14 in.



LEFT:
Hydrangeas #6
2023, monotype, 12 x 12 in.

RIGHT:
Evening Light
2021, monotype, 18 x 14 in.

greens—defines the scene. Small, almost covert shadows, cast by a figure and table, complete a singular impression of light.

In “Hydrangeas #6,” from a series of prints of a vase of flowers beneath a window, a quiet nest of petals holds, with striking self-possession before a wall split violently between sunlit and shadowed areas. The image thrives on just a comprehension but the fervent pursuit of nature’s paradoxes.

Among these monotypes lurks a single watercolor, “Reflection,” depicting a lake and trees. The difference in medium is not immediately apparent, as its effect arises from the same process of layering and rubbing away colors. Startlingly, a single wiped-away streak—the shoreline briskly dividing the image—regulates everything above





and below. It palpably separates the receding horizontal of water from the foliage rising through the upper three-quarters of the sheet. It separates light-carved volumes from their sheeny, reflected blurs in the water. Most notably, it supports the exuberant, tier-by-tier looming of a sunlit tree dominating the center. Ostensibly a record of physical events, this watercolor tells in fact a different kind of story, one of unfolding light.

Painting, watercolor and monotype are very different mediums, yet all lend themselves to an artist attuned to the rhythms of color. In terms of technique, one imagines Higgins' monotypes developing from experiments in oils, and the watercolors benefiting from the reworkings of monotype plates. Or perhaps influences run in the opposite direction. No matter—what counts is the way all these images, with their internal animation of shapes and hues, recall the radiant wholeness of our world.

John Goodrich
March 2024

Reflection
2023, watercolor, 12 x 12 in.



In the Center for Contemporary Printmaking studio, October 16, 2022
Photo credit: CFCP

Seeing the artist Elizabeth Higgins work quickly and spontaneously, with rollers and brushes, mixing the inks and applying them to the plexiglass matrix, you can feel the engagement with, and the exploration of the composition, as it develops over a short period of time... I am always excited to see Elizabeth grapple with the process.

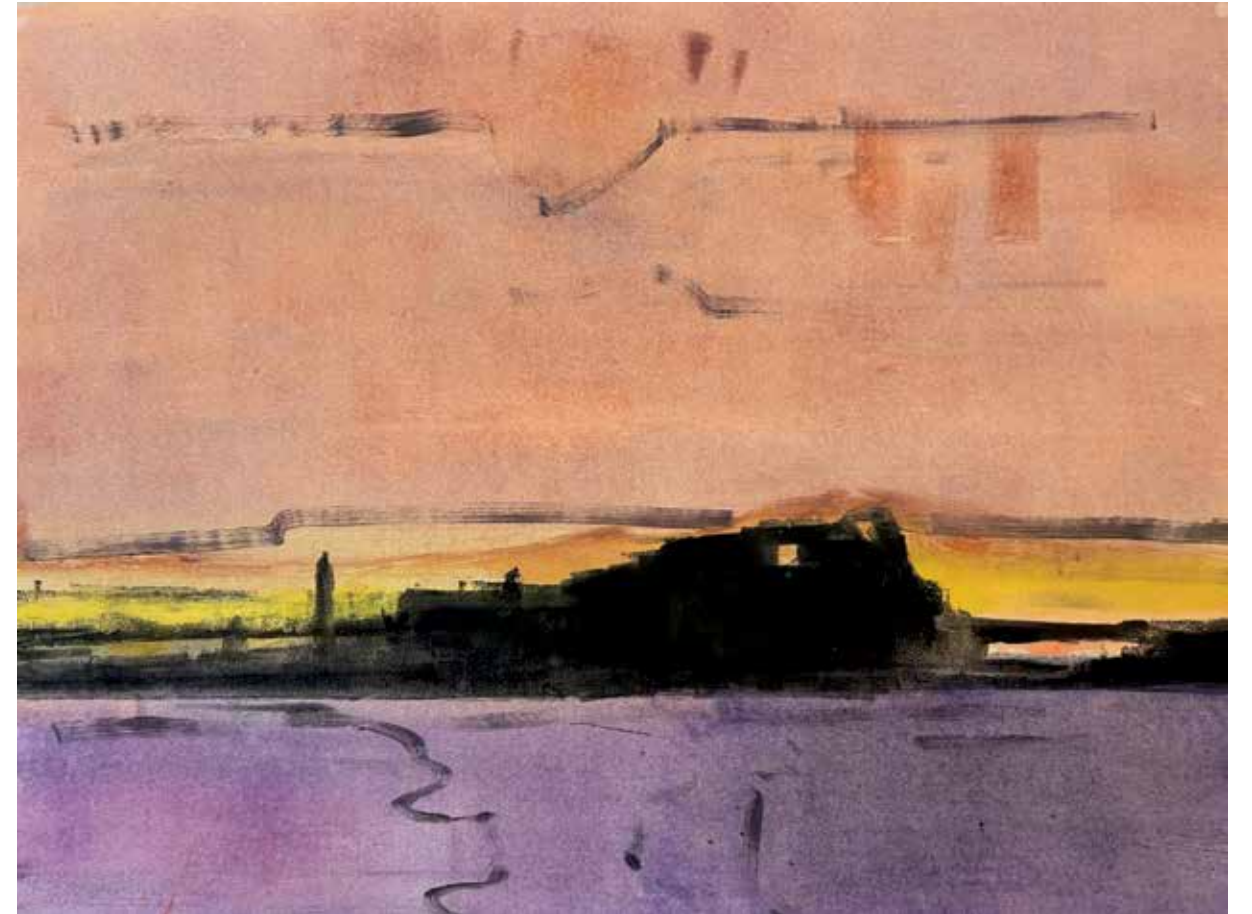
—Christopher Shore
Staff Master Printer
Center for Contemporary
Printmaking, Norwalk CT

Evening Light, Long Island Sound #3
2023, monotype, 18 x 24 in.





Evening Light, Long Island Sound #2
2023, monotype, 18 x 24 in.



Evening Light, Long Island Sound #1
2023, monotype, 18 x 24 in.



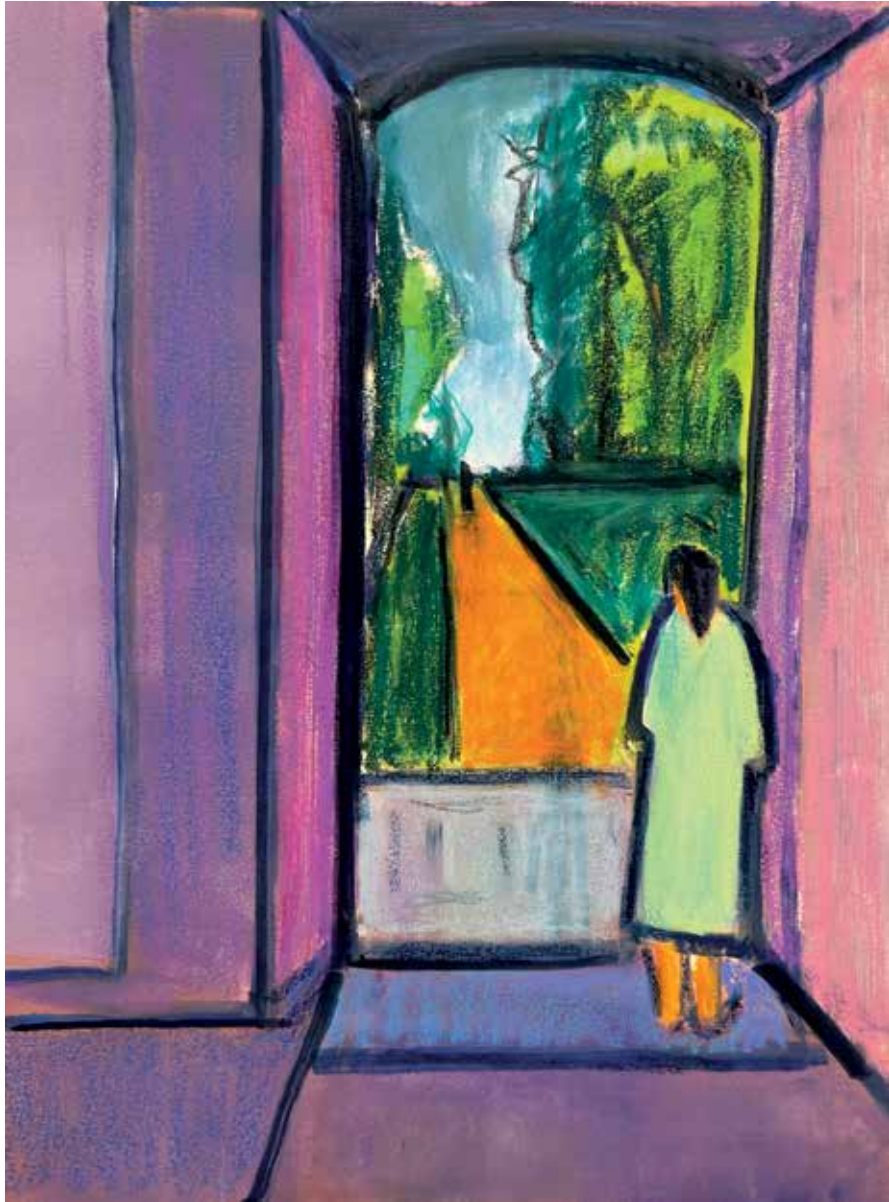
FROM LEFT:

Hydrangeas #1
2023, monotype, 12 x 12 in.

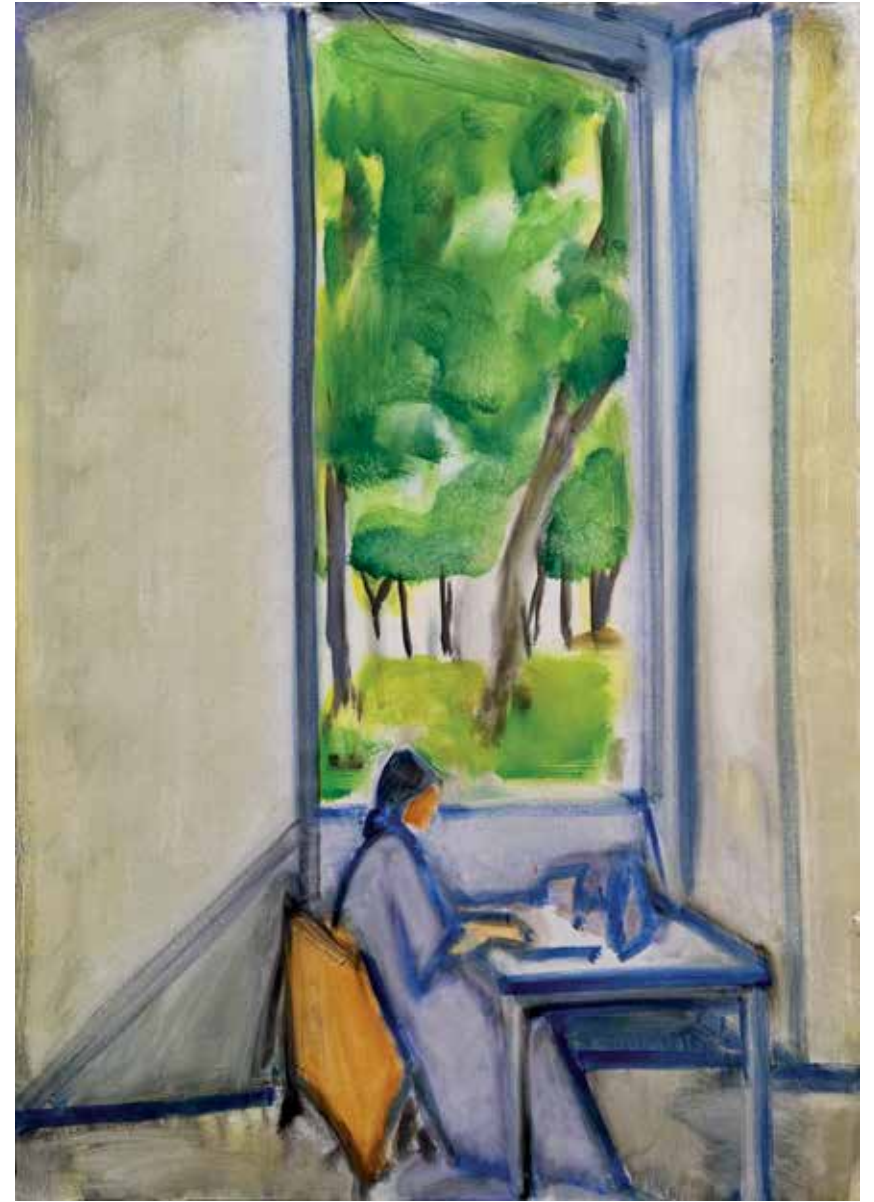
Hydrangeas #2
2023, monotype, 12 x 12 in.

Hydrangeas #4
2023, monotype, 12 x 12 in.

Hydrangeas #5
2023, monotype, 12 x 12 in.



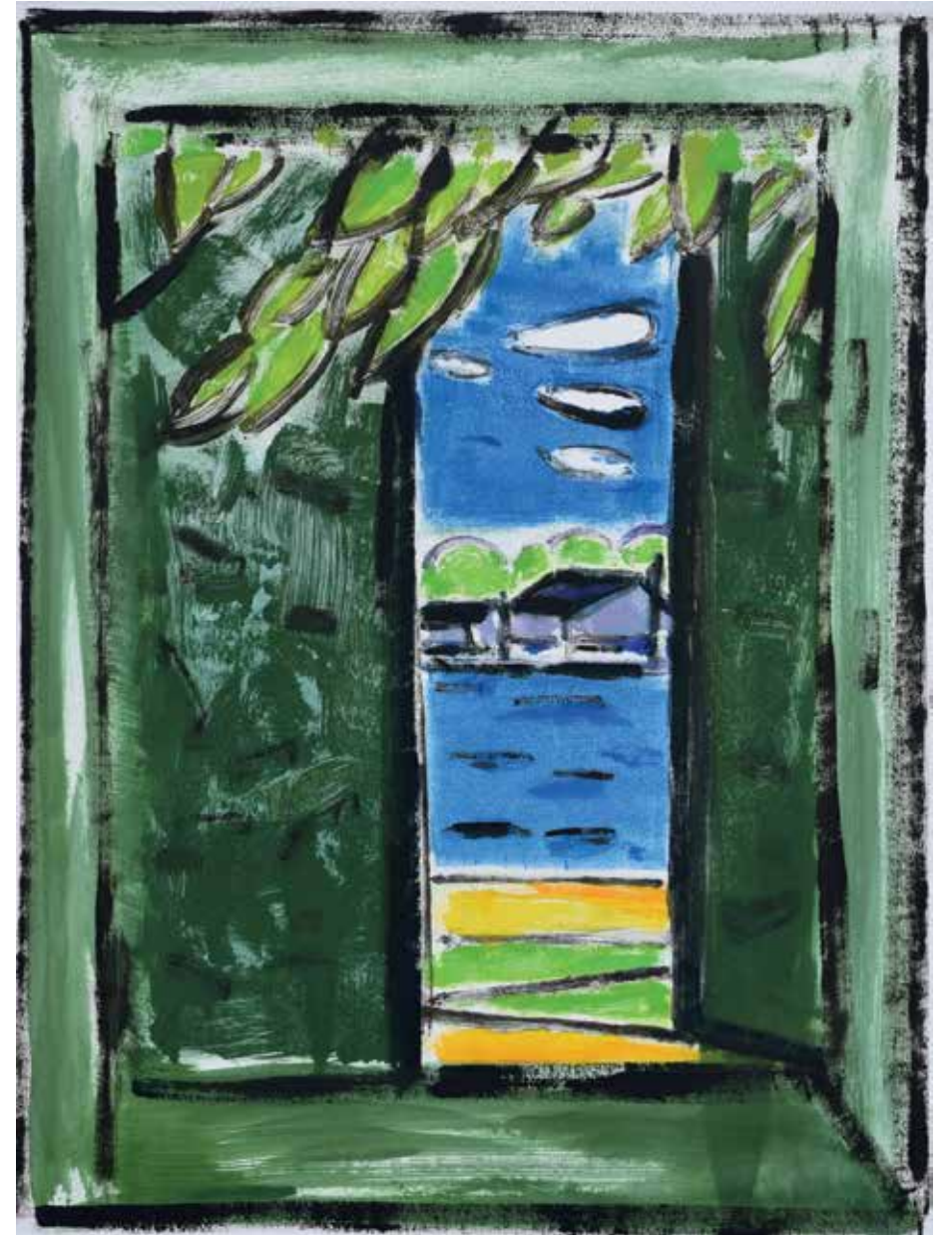
Waiting
2024, monotype and mixedmedia
12 x 9 in.



Morning Light
2024, oil on paper, 24 x 18 in.



View Across the River
2024, monotype 18 x 14 in.

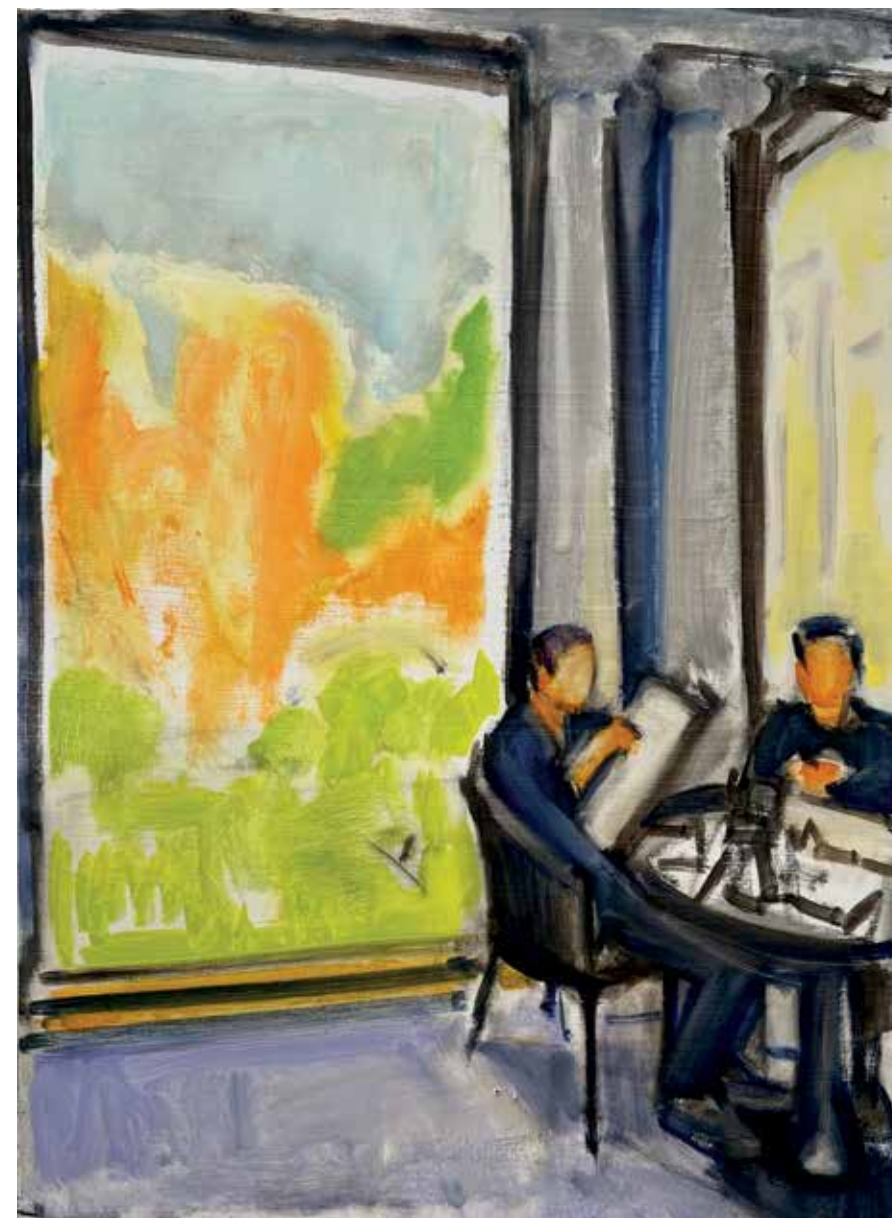


View Across the River
2024, monotype, 24 x 18 in.



LEFT:
Julia Reading
2020, monotype, 12 x 12 in.

RIGHT:
Morning News
2024, oil on paper, 28 x 18 in.

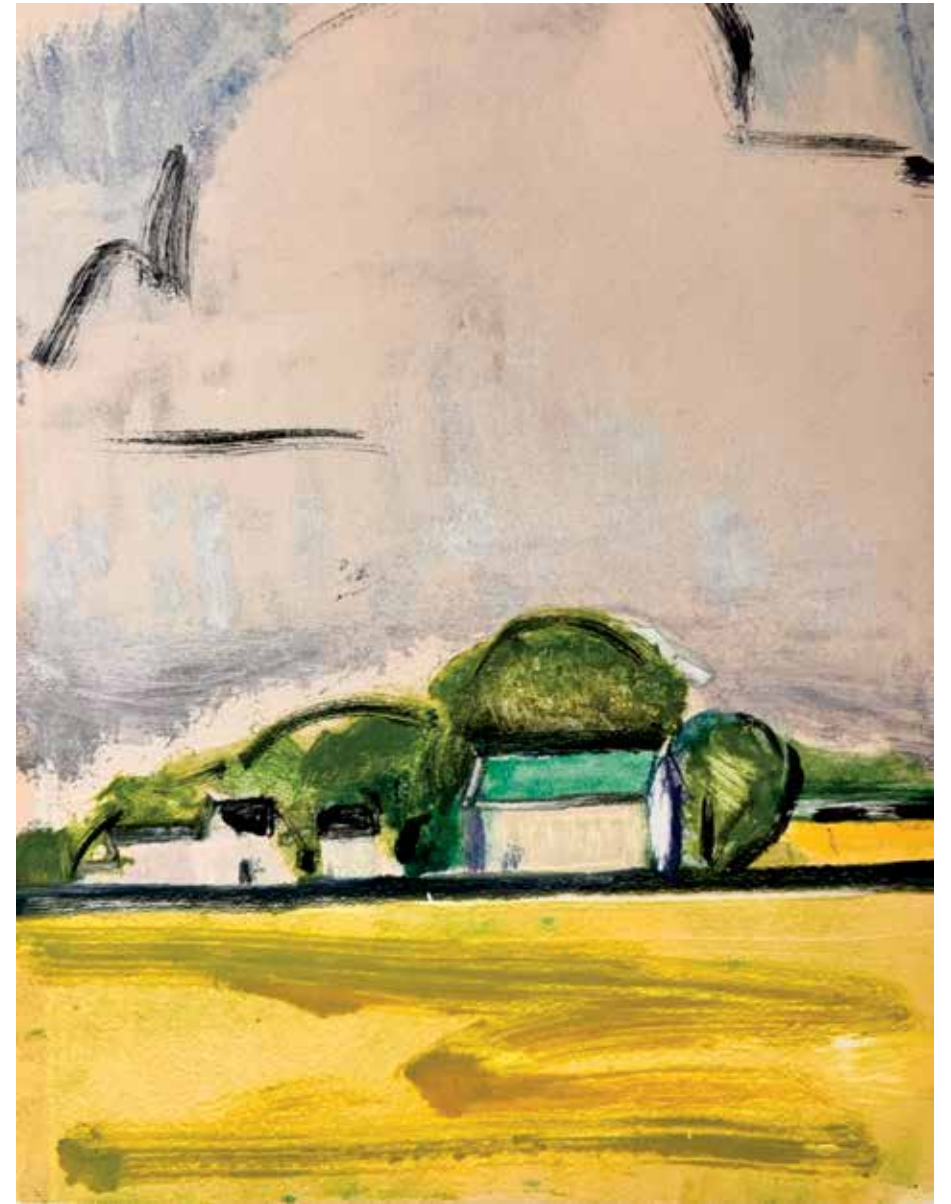


Sunset Over Galway Bay #2
2023, monotype, 18 x 14 in.





Day's End
monotype with handwork
2024, 18 x 14 in.



House and Yellow Fields
2023, monotype, 11 x 8½ in.

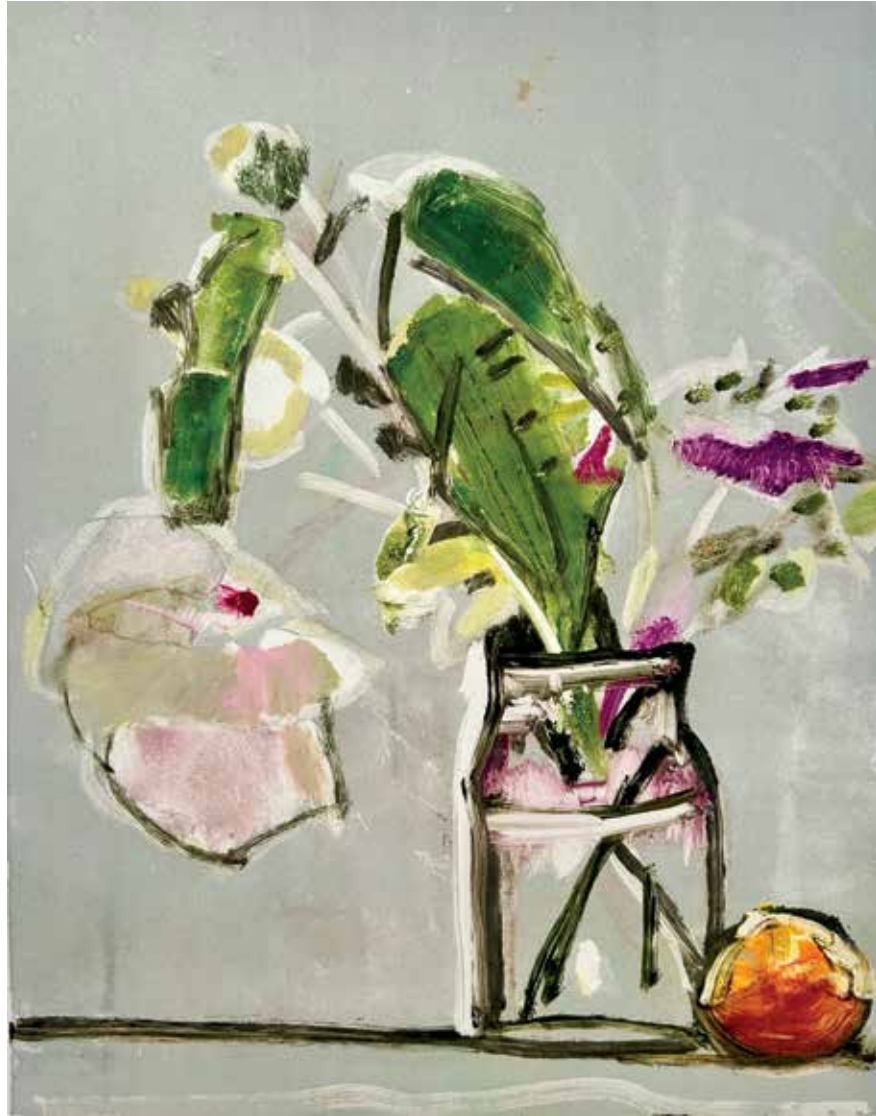


ABOVE:
Morning Sky
2024, monotype and watercolor, 11 x 17 in.

LEFT:
Road Into Town
2022, monotype, 12 x 12 in.

Last Light
2023, monotype, 12 x 12 in.



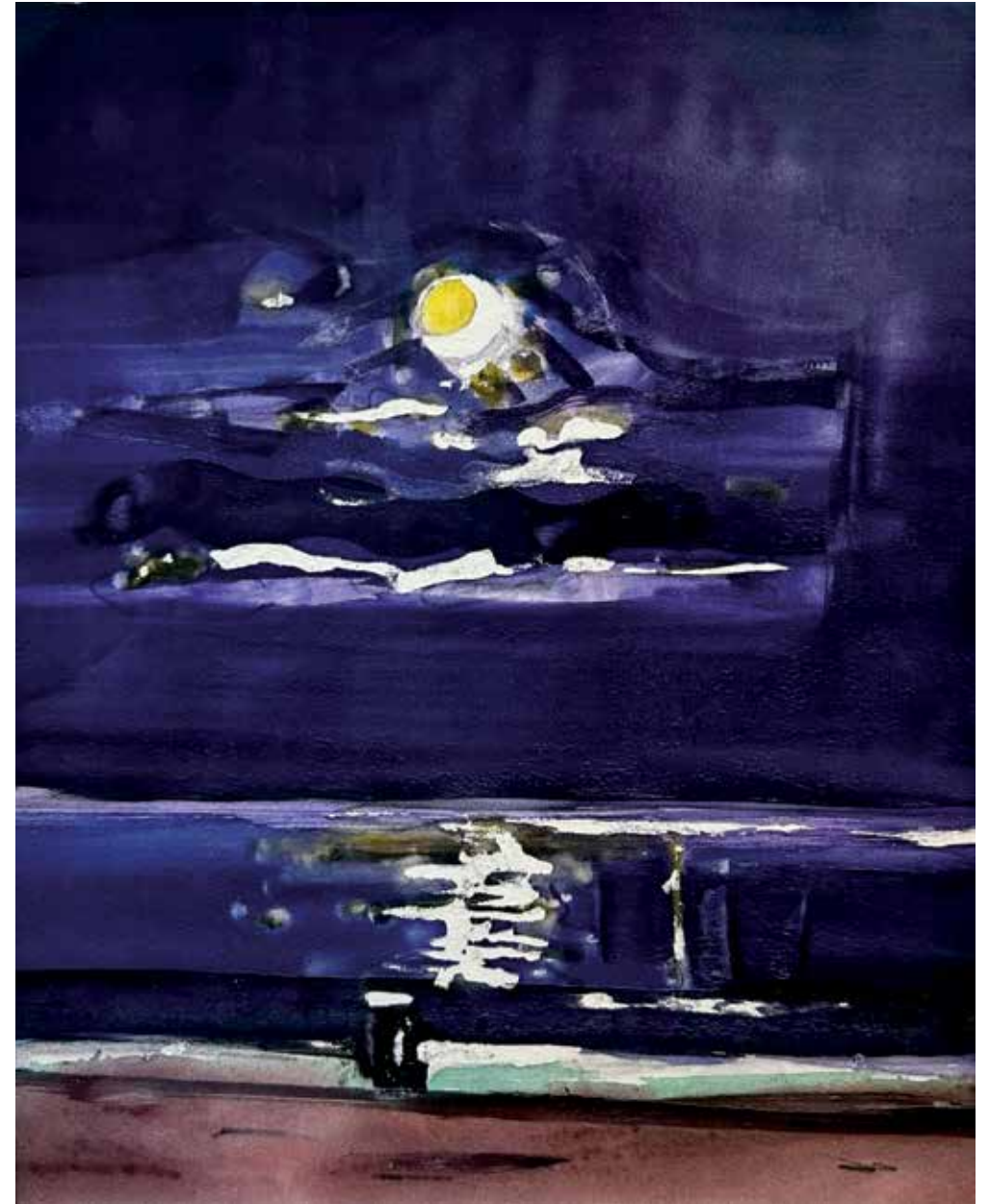


Still Life with Flowers
2020, monotype, 14 x 11 in.



Still Life with Hibiscus
2020, oil on paper, 40 x 30 in.

Moonlight on Water
2023, monotype, 10 x 8 in.

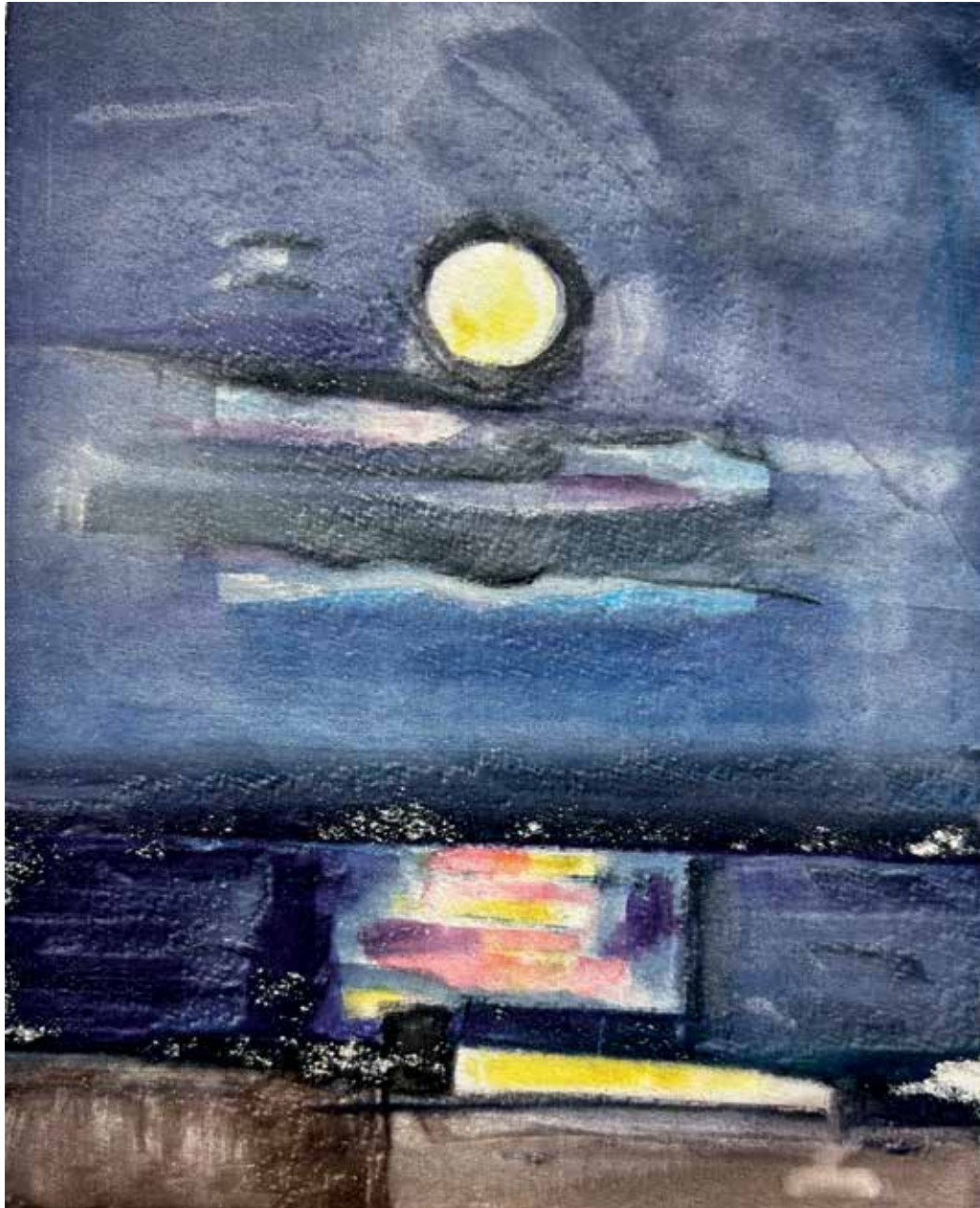




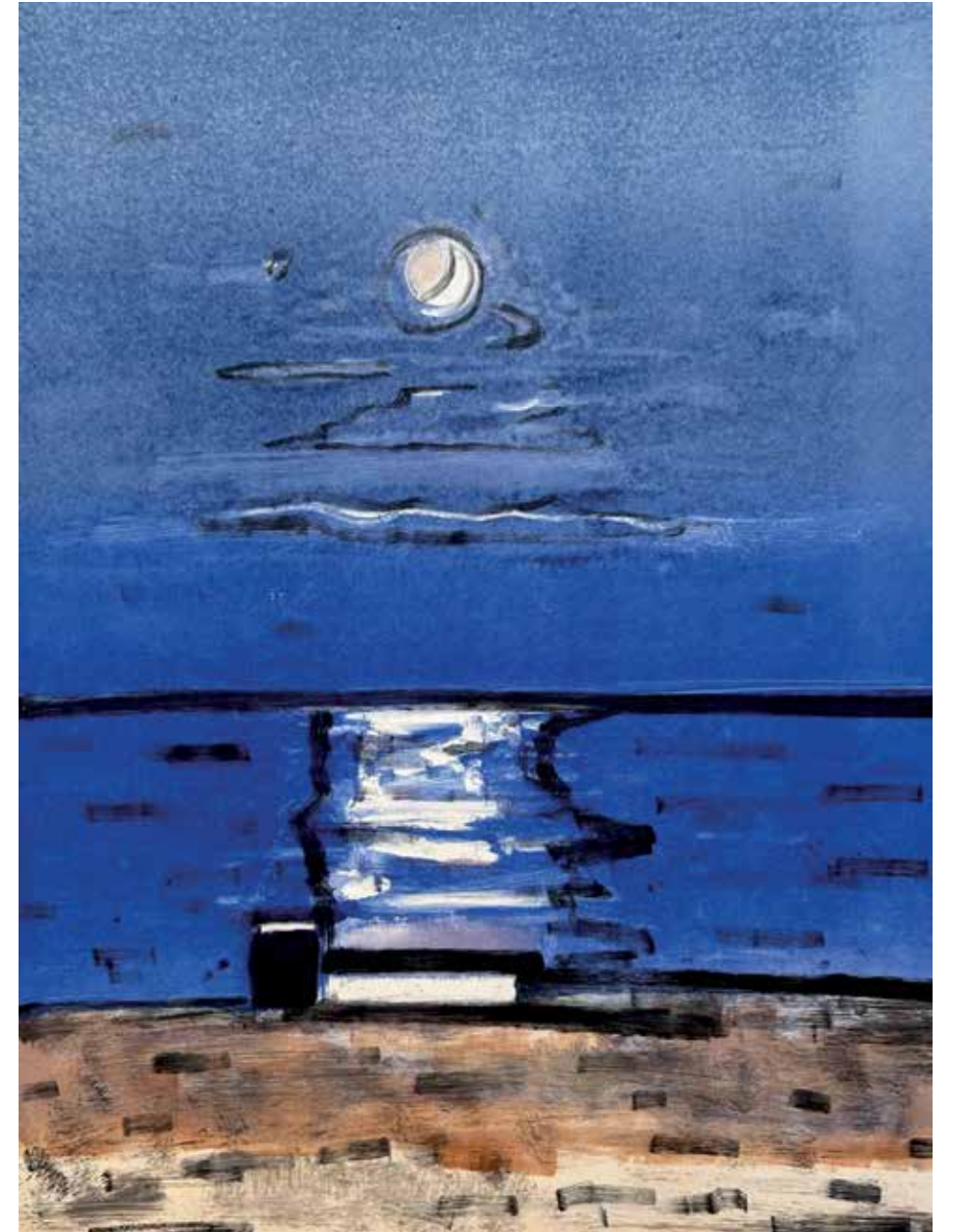
Moonlight on Water #1
2023, monotype, 24 x 18 in.



Moonlight on Water #3
2023, monotype, 24 x 18 in.



Moonlight on Water #2
2023, monotype, 10 x 8 in.



Moonlight on Water #4
2023, monotype, 24 x 18 in.



Boardwalk to the Sea
2023, woodblock lithograph and watercolor, 11 x 9 in.



Pilgrimage to St. Anne's Fogo Island, Newfoundland
2022, wood lithograph, 11 x 14 in.



Reflection
2021, monotype, 18 x 14 in.

Elizabeth Higgins

b. 1960, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Education

MFA Degree earned in Painting, Parsons School of Design, NYC
Studied with Paul Resika, John Heliker, Leland Bell, Albert Kresch, Robert DeNiro, Sr.

The Banff School of Fine Art, Banff, Alberta, Canada

BFA Queens University, Canada

Solo and Two Person Exhibitions

- 2024 *Elizabeth Higgins: New Monotypes*, George Billis Gallery, New York, NY
- 2022 *Elizabeth Higgins: How the Light Gets In*, Prince Street Gallery, NYC and George Billis Gallery, Westport, CT
- 2018 *Dreamscapes: Elizabeth Higgins and Cate M. Leach*, Art/Place, Fairfield CT
- 2016 Prince Street Gallery, New York City
Argazzi Art, Lakeville, CT
Two Views: Paintings by Elizabeth Higgins + Jeffrey Starkes, Art/Place, Fairfield, CT
- 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

- 2024 *Conversations: Zeuxis*, There Gallery, New York, NY
Chelsea Winter Group Exhibition Cavalier/Ebanks Gallery, New York City

- Fracture*, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- DCA Inaugural Art Show*, DCA, Darien, CT
- 2023 *Summer Selections*, Cavalier/Ebanks Gallery, NYC
Paperscapes, There Gallery, NYC
Flora, First Street Gallery, NYC
Monothon 2023, Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Norwalk, CT
- 2022 *Zeuxis: For The Love of Chardin*, First Street Gallery, NYC and Miller Art Museum, WI
Zeuxis: New Connection To Past Work, There Gallery, NYC
Monothon 2022, Art Space, Norwalk, CT
Human/Nature, Alice Gauvin Gallery, Portland, ME
Summer Salon, Silvermine Guild of Artists, curated by Roger Mudre
Nocturne, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
Light of Day: The Language of Landscape, Westbeth Gallery, NYC, curated by Karen Wilkin
8th Biennial FOOTPRINT International Exhibition, juried by Jeff Bergman, Director, Mary Ryan Gallery, NYC
- 2021 *Looking Out, Looking In: An Introspective*, Alice Gauvin Gallery, Portland, ME
- 2020 *About Women*, Lockwood Matthews Museum, Norwalk, CT, curated by Roger Mudre
Silvermine Gallery, Silvermine Art Guild
Gems: Small Still Lifes, There Gallery, NYC

- 2019 *The Studio*, First Street Gallery, NYC, and The Alabama Center for the Arts, Decatur, AL
My Friends, My Family and Me, There Gallery, NYC: Leland Bell, Temma Bell, Richard La Presti, Elizabeth Higgins, Clara Shen, Phyllis Floyd, Louisa Matthiasdottir
Capturing Waveny, The Carriage Barn Art Center, New Canaan, CT
Monothon 2019, Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Norwalk, CT
Silvermine Guild Summer Salon, curated by Paul Efstathiou, Hollis Taggart, NYC
- 2018 *Figures on Paper*, There Gallery, NYC
Capturing Waveny, The Carriage Barn Art Center, New Canaan, CT
Drawing the Curtain, The Painting Center, NYC
Silvermine Gallery, curated by Susan Eley, New Canaan, CT
Monothon 2018, Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Norwalk, CT
- 2016 *Zeuxis: The Unstilllife*: The Painting Center, New York City, Delaware College of Art and Design, and University of Mississippi
Monothon 2016, Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Norwalk, CT
Now and Then, 35th Anniversary Show Art/Place, Fairfield, CT
- 2015 *Monothon, 2015*, Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Norwalk, CT
Gallery Artists, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 2014 *Monothon, 2014*, Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Norwalk, CT
Avenue Gallery, Norwalk, CT
- 2011 *Large Works*, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 2010 *Continuing Views*, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 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
Mangel Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
- 1993 *Gallery Artists*, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 1991 *20th Anniversary*, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 1990 Nancy Poole's Studio, Toronto, Canada
Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 1989 *Young Masters II*, Ingber Gallery, New York City,
The Landscape, Prince Street Gallery, New York City
- 1988 *Young Masters*, Ingber Gallery, NYC and Addison/
Ripley Gallery, Washington, DC
Gallery Artists, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 1987 *Juried Small Works*, DeBello Gallery, Toronto, Canada
Juried Small Works, AWPY Juried Exhibition, NYC, juried by Patterson Sims, Associate Curator, Whitney Museum and Holly Solomon, Holly Solomon Gallery, NYC
Gallery Artists, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 1986 *Still Life Invitational*, College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA
Annual Group Show, Ward-Nasse Gallery, NYC
Gallery Artists, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 1984 *East Coast Painters*, University Art Association, two year traveling juried museum
- 1983 *Painters on View*, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, Ontario, Canada
Toronto Annual Outdoor Exhibition, Toronto, Canada
- 1982 *Image 82*, Ontario Society of Artists Annual Juried Exhibition, Centennial Gallery, Oakville, Canada

Awards

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

Bibliography

- John O'Hern, "Elizabeth Higgins – New Monotypes," *American Art Collector*, May 2024
- Luke Lyman, "Dispatch – On Elizabeth Higgins," *The New Criterion*, December 28, 2022
- Luke Lyman, "The Critic's Notebook," *The New Criterion*, November 29, 2022
- "Elizabeth Higgins," Larry Groff interview, for painting-perceptions.com, November 15, 2022
- "Artisthood and Parenthood," Neil Plotkin interview for Zeuxis with Elizabeth Higgins and Clara Shen, May 30, 2022
- Carl Little, "Human Nature," *Art New England Magazine*, March-April 2022
- Jorge Arango, "Distinctive Styles Display Nature's Emotional Range," *Portland Press Herald*, March 6, 2022
- Karen Wilkin, "Nature and Culture: Twelve Contemporary Landscape Painters," catalog essay for "Light of Day: The Language of Landscape" exhibition at Westbeth Gallery, January 2022
- John Goodrich, "Truth be Told" catalog essay for "Elizabeth Higgins" exhibition at Prince Street Gallery, 2019
- "Oil Paintings at Art/Place Gallery," *Fairfield and Westport Minuteman*, November 2018
- "Young Painters at Ingber," *Art World Magazine*, February 18, 1988

Selected Collections

- The Stahl Organization, New York, NY
University of Toronto, Canada
Connor Clark Company, Ltd.
Arthur Anderson & Company
First Choice Canadian Communication Corporation
VIA RAIL CANADA

The artist would like to thank her husband, Bill Jones and her daughters, Julia, Catherine and Elizabeth Jones, her extended family, friends and fellow artists for their support.

Thank you to George Billis and Amy Zoller of George Billis Gallery.

Thank you also to Christopher Shore, Liz Bannish and Kim Henrikson of The Center for Contemporary Printmaking.

A very special thanks to John Goodrich for his catalog essay.

LEFT:

House and Yellow Fields (detail)
2023, monotype, 11 x 8½ in.

BACK COVER:

Evening Light, Long Island Sound #2 (detail)
2023, monotype, 18 x 24 in.





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