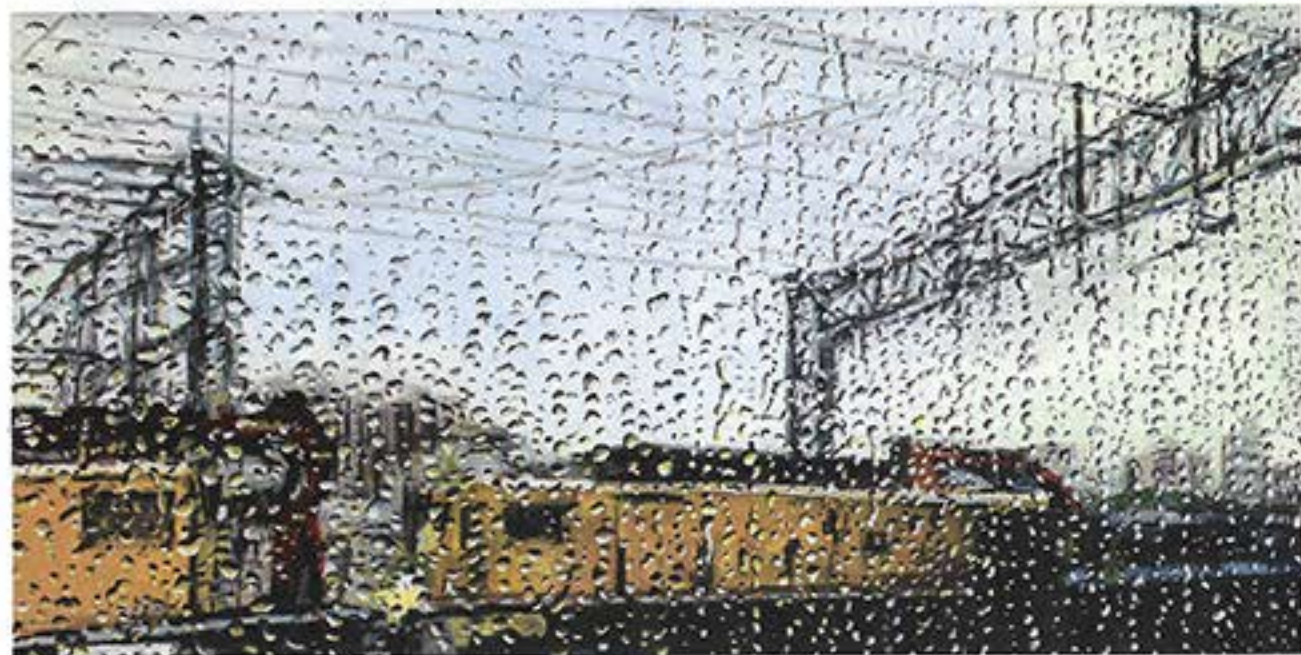


KAREN WOODS

## The Passenger's Perspective



Air travel is fraught with waiting, waiting, waiting. Checking in, getting the luggage tagged, boarding the jetway, in the aisle of the plane. Even when a traveler is in their seat, the waiting has seemingly just begun as the plane readies for pushback from the gate, taxis around the terminal, awaits takeoff and eventually soars into the sky. For Karen Woods, all that waiting comes with an emotional benefit: time to think, listen and stare out the window in deep reflection.

"Airplanes differ from other forms of transportation. Once they close the cabin door, the journey begins. The window provides psychological space for private thoughts even though one is surrounded by people," she says. "The moments before takeoff and after landing are the most poignant. And a rainy day makes this even more so. Most of all, however, moving across the tarmac, seeing all the lights, I find it exciting and relaxing at the same time."

As a response to this time waiting on airplanes, Woods has turned to painting what she sees from the oval window next to her. The works, many of which feature



1  
*Outside the Station*,  
oil on linen, 10 x 20"

2  
*Just Landed*, oil on  
canvas, 24 x 20"

3  
*Morning, Manhattan*,  
oil on linen, 10 x 10"



airplanes parked against an adjacent terminal or of rain-soaked tarmac, fit into a larger body of work based around travel. The new pieces will be on view starting October 29 at George Billis Gallery in New York City.

"These new paintings are about being a passenger; that is, leaving, returning home, moving and pausing, and the peculiar way the traveler sees the outside world," the Idaho-based painter says. "I've purposefully included different forms of transportation in this body of work, because each form offers its own viewpoint, speed, and sensation. I like the fact that the time we spend commuting is usually spent in reflection more than conventional productivity."

Woods, who works from a former electrical

repair shop that she shares with three other artists, typically paints New York City. "It has so much to offer—colors, complicated streets and lights, construction projects, plus so many ways to get around. I try to time these visits to coincide with rain storms, but I'm not always so lucky," she says. "Whenever I go, I always ask for a seat by the window."

In several of her new works—such as *Blue Bridge* and *Outside the Station*—Woods paints water droplets on the window as the scene beyond is blurred and distant. The composition and themes of such a work lend themselves to all sorts of metaphorical interpretations. "It's absolutely metaphorical, for an uncertain future and an uncertain way forward, and all the

emotions that accompany the journey. The road ahead may look threatening, or it may look serene. Nonetheless, there is beauty in the uncertainty," she says. "But these metaphors are discovered in hindsight—the finished paintings. What initiates a painting is pure visual pleasure in the colors and movement of any ride, anywhere. I begin with stacks of printed pictures—some of my own and some that friends have passed along. The image must have a strong visual and emotional pull for me to invest the time and mental energy to paint it." ●

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