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AMERICAN
art
COLLECTOR



RANDALL W.L. MOOERS

Building associations

Gertrude Stein wrote enigmatically, “A rose is a rose is a rose.” In a book for children, she wrote about a young girl named Rose. “Rose was her name and would she have been Rose if her name had not been Rose.”

In his still life paintings, Randall W.L. Mooers explores fruit as fruit and has said, “a pear is simply a pear; it isn’t anything else.” Nevertheless, we have brains cluttered with references that will read into the fruit or bring associations to appreciation of the painting.

Mooers usually titles his paintings simply with the names of the objects. “I’m not trying to control what others will project onto the paintings,” he explains. “I’m curious about what they see.” In the exhibition of his latest paintings there is a still life of pears with a narrative title, *Hero*, four pears holding up another in a victory pose. A housefly nibbles at one of the supporters. “There’s something going on between the pear and that fly. It changes for me. Maybe the fly will make people look at the painting a little longer and it will change for them too,” Mooers says.

The exhibition is being held at George Billis Gallery in New York, October 25 through November 19.



1



2



3

His virtuosity in presenting the subtleties of light, color and texture will create the first and strongest impression. The projections of associations will come second.

Mooers returns from the grocery store with a box of fruit that attracted him on that particular day's shopping trip. Among the familiar fruit on one trip was an unusual one, a pluot, a hybrid of apricots and plums. He says, "I like the skin color and its shape—the character of it. And it has this kind of cloudy thing that happens on the skin."

Arranging his finds on a table near the natural light of his north-facing window, he will often photograph the setup all day long until there is no more light. "I'm attracted to the subtlety of the light," he says, "the way

it moves across the wall. I can position the table in different areas and get a different effect. In the long horizontal paintings, they're much darker to the left." After sorting through his photographs to find the right combination of qualities, he will begin the eight- to 10-month process of creating the painting.

Often a tiny dead leaf accompanies the pears. "I look for pears with dead leaves in the store," he comments. "I've also collected them over the years. The leaf gives the pear some character. It's like the cherry on the cake. Suddenly, it feels complete."

It's tempting to read the little leaf as a *memento mori* or a reminder that all things die, but sometimes a leaf is simply a leaf. ●

1
Hero, oil on canvas
over panel, 14 x 14"

2
Five Pears with Pluot,
oil on canvas over
panel, 9 x 28"

3
*Grapes in Glass Bowl with
Persimmon*, oil on canvas
over panel, 30 x 30"