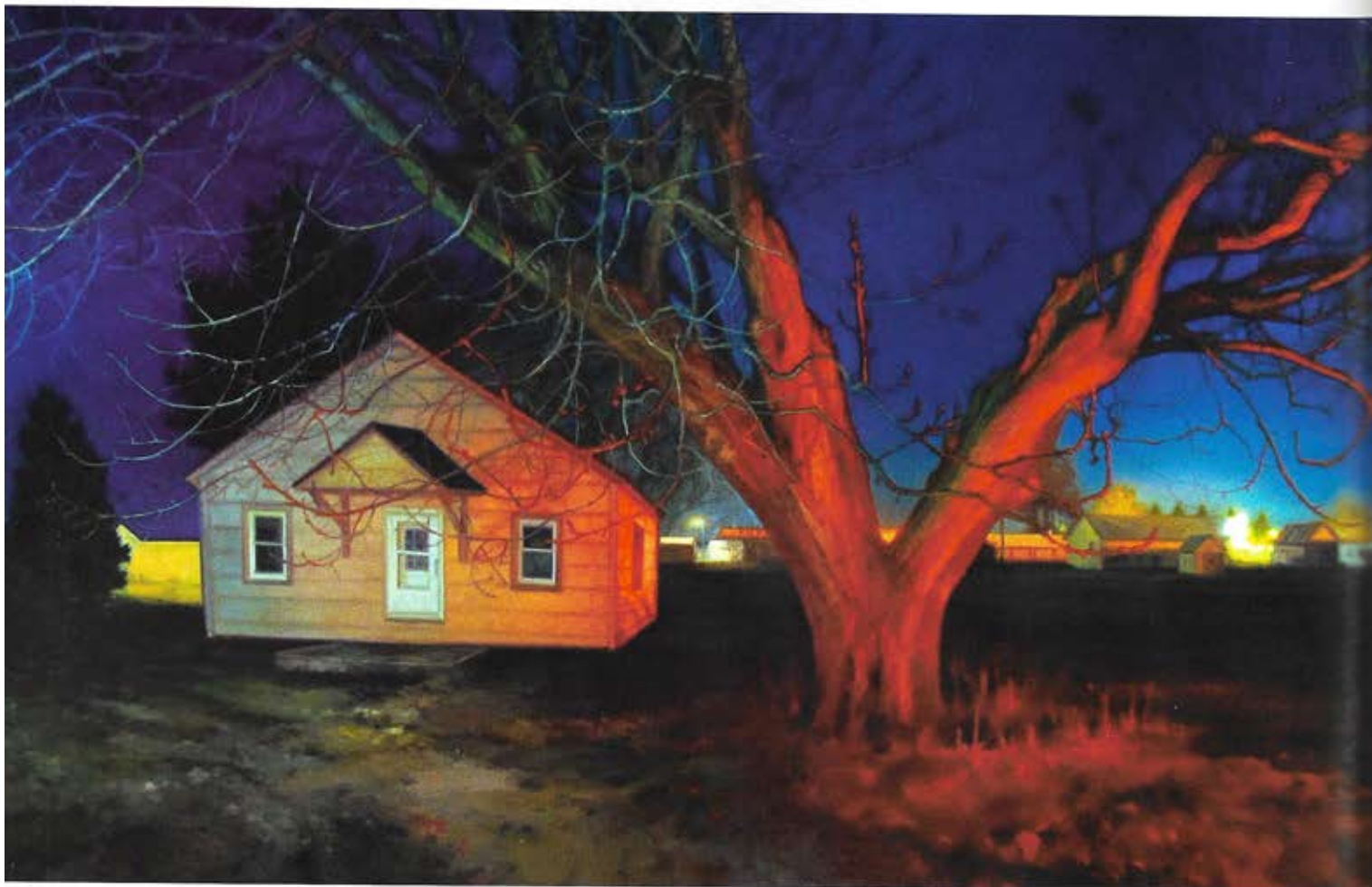


SARAH WILLIAMS

# Around Town



Driving down a suburban street might feel like a mundane act for many, but for Sarah Williams it can be an exhilarating exploration of her favorite subjects. Particularly at night when her car's headlights rake against trees and send shadows whipping across the fronts of homes set back within green yards and nestled within night's embrace.

The artist, who's based in Springfield, Missouri, ties much of her current work to time spent in the Dallas area, where she was pursuing a master's degree from the University of North Texas. Living in a sprawling metropolis like Dallas made her miss the more rural lifestyle of Missouri. "I understand now that I was really homesick. So I began working with nostalgic imagery from my childhood in north Missouri. I realized how important those places had become to me," Williams says. "I love this idea of little towns spread out with 30

miles of farmland between them. They really give you a sense of place and time, especially when you compare it to a place like Dallas, where there is so much prefabrication and a McDonald's on every corner. You can get lost in that."

After she received her master's, Williams was offered a job teaching art at Missouri State University in Springfield. She leaped at the opportunity—for the job and also the relocation back to familiar settings. That was seven years ago, and she's still fascinated by small-town streets and how light interacts with the homes and yards. She will be showing her new pieces, 11 in total, in a show opening May 28 at George Billis Gallery in New York City.

"It's been a fascinating journey for me. In grad school we talked about artists being a fox or a hedgehog. A fox jumps around a lot on subjects or themes, but a

**1**  
*Burnham Street,*  
oil on panel, 18 x 30"

**2**  
*Christopher Lane,*  
oil on panel, 12 x 24"

**3**  
*Wildcat Drive,*  
oil on panel, 24 x 24"

**4**  
*Laurie Lane,*  
oil on panel, 16 x 20"





2



3



4

hedgehog moved through one consistent idea. I'm definitely a hedgehog," Williams says of her captivation with her nighttime views of residential neighborhoods. She adds that painting these subjects is also a tribute in many ways to her roots; she adores these Missouri streets and the towns that they stretch through. "In many ways I'm painting my stubbornness, because I love these places. I like going to New York and Los Angeles, where George Billis has galleries, but I also really like coming home, too."

Works in the show include *Burnham Street*, which depicts a home illuminated by two different sources of light, one white and one red. Although the light feels kind of otherworldly, when you think about it, it makes

perfect sense: imagine a car idling in front of the house, headlights shining on one half of the painting and red brake lights shining on the other half. "When I'm around town or visiting family I'll take pictures of things I see that I like," she says. "For this one, the tree has kind of an unnatural shape because there were power lines that ran through the tree and the power company had trimmed the tree way back. But for my painting I removed the power lines. I also wanted to get the glowing lights on the horizon, which are the fast food joints and other businesses in town."

In *Christopher Lane*, a house and tree are illuminated by strands of lights in a backyard. A fence blocks our view, which

gives the scene a mysterious setting, as if there is a party happening on the other side of the fence, one that the viewer has not been invited to. In other works, such as *Mooney Road*, the homes have a lonesome sort of presence, and yet also character as they stand triumphantly silent in the dark.

Williams says the paintings are self-portraits in a way. She's painting her past and her present. "I do feel like I'm painting myself," she says. "These places are who I am. And it was only after living in a big city that began to realize this is who I am." ●

#### George Billis Gallery

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