



Dennis Aufiery

LOOKING PAINTING SEEING

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Courthouse Cultural Center, East Gallery

80 East Ocean Boulevard, Stuart, Florida, 34994

February 21 to April 20, 2012

Notes by Patricia Bailey

DENNIS AUFIERY is a contemporary painter whose work frequently deals with landscape. His landscapes address seaside subjects: water, boats, dunes and the rocky shores of Maine. Not interested in such? If you are thinking that this Florida-based painter and teacher is working in familiar or sentimentally traditional metiers, take a closer look. These are invariably visually and intellectually challenging paintings – not the kind of scenic calendar pictures designed to provide images of sentiment or cliché. Like the works of Paul Cézanne, Albert Marquet, or Marsden Hartley, they provide, with their rigorous organization and bright colors, an aerobic workout for the visual cortex. He takes hold of his subjects with the vigor of a manual laborer; their surfaces have the consistency and skillful integrity of a fine craftsman.

But for Aufiery, to paint is to seek, to see, and his brush is usually an athletic outpost of his brain. Every patch in these works plays its part to direct our eyes through the dynamically structured movement in each of these compositions, and he wants us to share the visual search. They owe as much of a debt to 20th century abstraction as to other scenic prototypes, though at times they may recall such contemporary masters as Aufiery's teacher, Neil Welliver, with whom he shares the practice of exploratory, smaller plein air studies in the landscape later developed into larger studio paintings. These studies are often fresh and direct, but there is a significant difference: working in Floridian light has influenced Aufiery's color.

The true explorer's journey is rarely routine. Aufiery has been at his pursuit for almost

40 years. This is a painter in command of his language of paint.

To his forceful language of painted marks, add Auiery's sincere interest in place – whether Florida sand scrub, Maine boatyards, or the juxtapositions of urban and manmade decay with nature which fascinates him – and you – begin to have a sense of the sophistication of these works.

His interests lead him to find the things that suggest dislocation or visual oxymorons, rather than narrative.

He does not give us the story whole; he wants us to discover it for ourselves. The process is stimulating, and sharing his pleasure in the search is worth the viewer's effort of the journey as well.

PATRICIA BAILEY, an artist with more than 35 years experience in arts education and administration, has written for various publications including criticism for Art/World in the 1980s and the online journal Artcritical.com. She was Associate Producer of a 1998 documentary film on the life of artist John Heliker, and publisher for Robert LaHotan: The Early Years (2017). She is currently President and Executive Director of the Heliker-LaHotan Foundation (heliker-lahotan.org), where in addition to various projects, she has developed an artist residency program in the former home and studios of her longtime friends, the late artists John Heliker and Robert LaHotan on Great Cranberry Island in Maine.
