



Lucy Gould Reitzfeld

Recent Work

Much like several other landscape painters of her generation, Lucy Reitzfeld employs the fact of nature as a malleable vehicle for the act of painting. In contrast to

the historically based images of Joan Nelson and April Gornick, Reitzfeld has found within the landscape tradition a structure, an armature upon which the interplay of light and color takes precedence over critical assessments. Reitzfeld's handling of nature's values, its tints and shades, suggests much observation and study; an array of light conditions, the degrees of cool and warm tonalities, luminous cast shadows, multifarious cloud formations, reflections in water and atmospheric effects, all contribute to the physical veracity of these paintings. Her landscapes are all the more impressive because of their evolution away from the motif, as they are worked out in the studio from a compilation of sketches, memory and family photographs. Clearly Reitzfeld would agree with Braque that the creative process should parallel rather than imitate nature.

Reitzfeld eschews a formal or systematic approach to her chosen scene. Each of her paintings describes (but is not limited to) a particular moment; they are a cumulative response to a place and time, rather than attempts at documentation. Reitzfeld works toward a balance between light and substance, her sure handling of the brush lends both definition and illumination to form and space. She shares with the late Fairfield Porter the notion that a place can be described without sacrificing the liquid sensation of paint.

Reitzfeld does not shy away from landscape painting's romantic

(or neo-romantic) associations or implications, though this is just one by-product of her endeavors. Paintings such as *Late Lake Bob* and *Maze Farm Fog* convey an innate truthfulness, a kind of honest reporting that supersedes its romantic aspect. Reitzfeld's landscapes have an eerie stillness about them, a calmness that belies their active surface. They are ruminations on nature's all-encompassing quietude. In all their moods and humors, from the exuberance of *Fall Blaze* and *Grass Dance*, to the contemplative, placid *Lake Mist*, and finally to the brooding, poignant *A Moon for Stanley*, these landscapes could represent an extension of the artist's inner life. For Reitzfeld, in a sense, nature functions like a mirror, affording her an opportunity to seek out the deepest feelings engendered there, and bringing them to fruition; the landscape as self-portrait.

The interaction between observation and introspection in Reitzfeld's work introduces an element of mystery. *Sunbath*, with its low perspective and partially concealing embankment and *Road to Lake Bob*, in which a country road leads off into a darkened woods, are suffused with a sense of foreboding, reminiscent of Edward Hopper's scenes of isolated farmhouses. Her moonlit landscapes, particularly *Dream Under Derby Moon*, are among her strongest compositions. It is as if the elimination of detail had freed the artist to explore an otherworldly potential, the darker side of nature's bounty. Taken all together, Reitzfeld's selection of specific locations is based more on their visual and emotional resonance than on their picturesque attributes. In this her work is thoroughly modern. They are pictures that one feels compelled to return to over time, as if each reading might offer a means of experiencing nature, momentarily, through the eyes and mind of the artist.

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