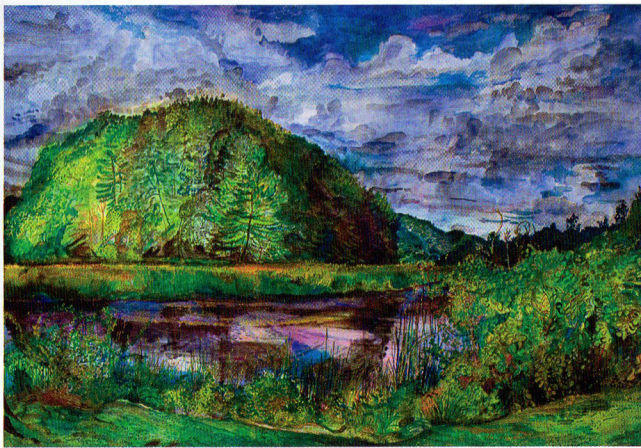


## NANCY FRIESE: MONUMENTAL WATERCOLOR PAINTINGS

Cade Tompkins Projects • Providence, RI • [www.cadetompkins.com](http://www.cadetompkins.com) • Through August 11, 2011

In contemporary art, landscape painting might seem a bit old-fashioned; however, this exhibit shocks new life into that longstanding tradition. In nine large-scale watercolor or landscapes (measuring forty by sixty inches), Nancy Friese gives a fresh perspective to nature's forms. She accomplishes this through her expressive painterly skies, heightened sense of color, and gestural technique. Though more an expressionist than a naturalist, Friese paints the outdoors using a technique that makes her work look more like oil than watercolor. That, combined with her seductively bright colors and a certain flatness to the work, creates, overall, a harmonious tension.

In *Beech Copse and Greensward*, Friese captures a clearing within the structured landscape of an arboretum. In this, as in each of her paintings, once the viewer moves past the initial jewel-toned colors and looks closer, the



Nancy Friese, *Lieutenant River*, 2010, watercolor on Lanagravure, 40 x 60". Courtesy of artist and Cade Tompkins Projects. Photo: Erik Gould.

details of human-made bridges, roads, and trimmed lawns emerge. Even though Friese is a plein-air painter, she does not attempt to recreate the Henry Thoreau experience. Rather, she focuses on areas that have been tamed and maintained by man, regardless of whether

these locations are in the mountainous West or the picturesque Northeast. Even in a work such as *Mountain Valley*, with beautiful hills as its focus, Friese leaves a road in the foreground and a hint of farmed fields on the hills.

It is clear from this series that Friese is drawn to environments where the land has been physically altered and further prevented from growing wild due to human intervention that provides constant upkeep. Perhaps subconsciously, Friese is drawn to these areas of nearby nature because, even though they are maintained, nature is constantly on the verge of rebellion. It is this mark that

man has made on nature that Friese subtly recognizes in her work, and despite being hypnotized by her rich colors and abstracted skies, these landscapes still unknowingly hint that even neglected lawns will eventually regain their savageness.

—Renee Doucette