



CADE TOMPKINS PROJECTS

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ART REVIEW

Art blossoms into ‘Paradise’ at Cade Tompkins Projects

By Cate McQuaid Globe Correspondent, March 4, 2021



Michael Krueger's "The Optimism of Trees," painted in 2020. MICHAEL KRUEGER

PROVIDENCE — Marching through pandemic life with my head down, I can forget that lovingly, skillfully made art is a refuge and a resting place. So after a dreary February punctuating a long year, I went to see “Paradise” at Cade Tompkins Projects. I found deep pleasures there: Peaceful landscapes. Frolicsome florals. The lusciousness of paint and the generosity of a painter’s close attention.

“Paradise” is not all Edenic landscapes. The show also considers how we yearn for paradise. We remember it. We strive for it. But we are almost never there.

“Time... thou ceaseless lackey to eternity,” a stunning, ambitiously large woodcut (at more than 13 feet across) by Orit Hofshi depicts people amid rubble. A single building — it’s a Czech synagogue — still stands, a beacon of faith and better times. The rest is wreckage beneath an orange sky. An older woman looks directly at us, commanding witness.



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Orit Hofshi's "Time...thou ceaseless lackey to eternity."

Hofshi's image of hardship and suffering feels like the center of a vortex around which the other works spin: To a pessimist, this is reality, and the sweet landscapes are mere dreams and hopes. To an optimist, this ravaged world is on the cusp of rebirth.

Nearby figurative works are emotionally and texturally complex. Bob Dilworth's "Maria" depicts a ghostly woman, her face emerging twice from a luscious tangle of paint and sparkly blue fabric. Is she regally enrobed by vines, or being consumed by them?



But the landscapes and florals trumpet the glories of nature and paint, offering respite from humanity's challenges. Nancy Friese's "Long Summer Light," presents the bounty of an old tree's vast summer boughs as they stretch over a honeyed field. And in Michael Krueger's "The Optimism of Trees," paint sculpted into fruit tree blossoms pop against a vaporous sunset sky, some blushing shamelessly in shades of coral and pink. Paradise.

Friese, Krueger, and Dilworth's paintings were all finished in 2020. It warmed me just to imagine the painters continuing to create — like a fruit tree — as we gritted our teeth through the last year. Art and creation still matter. Beauty is a salvation. We go on.

Bob Dilworth "Maria," painted in 2020



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Nancy Friese's "Long Summer Light," painted in 2020

PARADISE

At Cade Tompkins Projects, 198 Hope St., Providence, through March 31.
401-751-4888, www.cadetompkinsprojects.com