

ALEXANDRE GALLERY

THE NEW YORK OBSERVER

FEBRUARY 20, 2006

MARIO NAVES

WINTRY MIX

The paintings of Lois Dodd, on display at Alexandre Gallery, are funny—not ha-ha funny, but funny as in peculiar, arid and cool. Despite the conventional character of Ms. Dodd's subjects—the Vermont countryside, trees and ponds being her specialty—the pictures themselves aren't conventional at all.

Winter is the title of the show. Ms. Dodd undoubtedly responds to the sweep and beauty of snowy vistas, but the paintings don't dwell on the awe-inspiring or the picturesque. We respond to a canvas like *Gihon River Thaw, Johnson, Vermont* (2005) because of what it does as painting—as a jutting array of spiky brush strokes, say, or an elastic warp of space—and not for its homage to nature.

Indeed, those who like more traditional landscapes might find the pictures disconcerting. Putting brush to canvas as if she spoke only in declarative sentences, Ms. Dodd is possessed of a no-nonsense severity. She sets up pictorial expectations only to pull the rug out from under the viewer. This, she insists, not that. She isn't a particularly ingratiating artist; there's a hardness

to her vision—a slyness, too. Her deadpan manner, thoroughly without pretense, makes the experience of her paintings that much more bracing.

Ms. Dodd is forever probing events as they pass before her eye. In the smaller paintings, her brush is animated and forthright, burrowing its way into each motif with an impatient sensuality. The larger canvases, in contrast, are merciless in their concision and crackle with intellectual purpose; they are flat in affect, and more powerful because of it.

Oak Tree and Mountainside (2004) is a splendidly offhand précis of Ms. Dodd's fixations. Fulfilling the requirements of representation without kowtowing to them, it sings like a staccato chorus of blunt and unapologetic brushstrokes. If there were a curator at the Whitney with a feel for painting and the nerve to follow it (I can dream, can't I?), he would fête this veteran artist with the museum retrospective she so richly deserves. In the meantime, congratulate Alexandre Gallery—and Ms. Dodd, of course—for a curious and captivating job well done.

Lois Dodd: Winter is at Alexandre Gallery, 41 East 57th Street, until Feb. 28.