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Wave Hill



Wave Hill Blog

floating oases: An interview with Amy Lincoln

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Danni Shen, Curatorial Fellow in Visual Arts, organizes and interprets exhibitions at Wave Hill.



On view in the Tea Room in Wave Hill House December 8, 2015–March 27, 2016 is a selection of **Amy Lincoln**'s paintings—*floating oases*. The show includes several works inspired by Wave Hill's plant collection and landscape that were created in her studio here during the 2015 Winter Workspace. The copper beech outside Glyndor Gallery, glory-of-the-snow blooming in the

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woodland in early spring, robins alighting on our rolling lawns and Wave Hill's Tropical House, one wing of the Marco Polo Stufano Conservatory, all find their way into the artist's alluringly vivid compositions, evoking otherworldly landscapes tinged with strangeness.

As the title of her show suggests, *floating oases* alludes to a pleasant change from what is usual but via metaphorical refuges not tethered to a definite place. While precisely applying formal techniques in composition, color, gradient, form, perspective and scale, Lincoln's paintings question the way in which we envisage paradise or utopia. Yet these "no-place" spaces come perhaps from the familiarity of one's own idealized constructions of the unfamiliar. Merging traditional art genres of landscape, still life, portraiture and botanical illustration with kitsch and cultural clichés, the works at once conjure lush figments of the imagination, while meticulously rendering natural forms and landscapes.

Make sure to attend Lincoln's Artist Talk, which will be held on Sunday, March 6, at 3:00pm in Wave Hill House.

Danni Shen: The scale, perspective, composition and color choices/combinations in your paintings are very particular. How do you make these decisions when creating your work?

Amy Lincoln: I paint representationally because I'm interested in creating a fictional space, in depicting the world as the human mind conceives of it, as opposed to the way a camera depicts space. Scale plays into that, creating perspective. I like folk art or Japanese woodcut imagery because it depicts the world in a way that is very different from photographs.

The color combinations are usually a primary focus of each painting. Lately I have been interested in making every color in the painting really saturated and bright. I've also been thinking about making the background or sky gradient using two colors that don't blend well, such as an orange-y red and ultramarine blue. I like the idea of the colors fighting each other, creating tension in the painting. People expect nature imagery to be soothing and peaceful, so I want the color to work against that, to make the paintings a little jarring and unexpected.

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DS: What are your influences?

AL: Some influences are folk art, Henri Rousseau, Gauguin. Other artists in New York include Lisa Yuskavage and David Hockney.

Moving to New York and living and working in small spaces was also an important influence because I stopped making a lot of paintings fast, and started taking a lot of time to make one painting slowly and carefully. We buy and dispose of so many cheaply made objects, and I want the objects I make to feel very much separate from consumerism, to be meditative or even sacred.

DS: Do you paint from life?

AL: Not really. I usually go to a place, such as Wave Hill, and take a lot of photographs. Then I work out a composition in drawings back in my studio. Then I work out some of the color in a study. Then comes the final painting. I consult the photographs, and also do Google image searches for specific details of the plants in the paintings.

DS: How has your painting practice developed over time, and in what direction is it headed?

AL: I used to paint portraits, then I started painting still lifes of individual potted plants, then still lifes with multiple plants. And these became landscapes. The landscapes have gotten denser and more colorful. I'm not sure what I will do next. I think I'll keep going with the current subject matter for a while.

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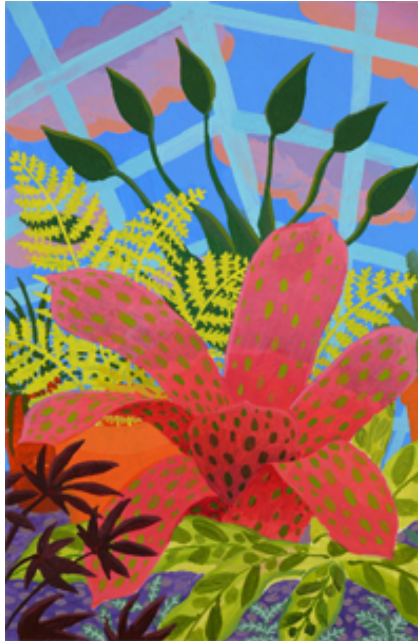


DS: For me, these places seem faraway and even utopian. Are you thinking about real and/or surreal places when you make these works?

AL: For the most part I am not thinking of real places. I'm thinking more of clichéd images of the landscape, or how a child might draw the landscape. I want the paintings to be kind of impossibly idealized and staged. For me, the imagery is a little ironic. It feels a bit hokey to make nature paintings, so I'm trying to play up the kitschy imagery; at the same time, I am sincerely interested in delving into all the diversity and visual richness of plants. That being said, I do try to stick with a particular climate or geographical area so that the plant species make sense together.

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DS: For the images inspired by Wave Hill, can you talk about why you chose those plants or sites?

AL: Most of the work inspired by Wave Hill is from the Tropical House, which is filled with plants from South America. I think of them as jungle plants. There's a huge variety, and they are very exotic and strange-looking compared to the plants that grow in our climate in the Northeast. These tropical plants provide great subject matter because they have so many stripes and interesting colors and shapes.

I also painted the copper beech tree outside Glyndor House because it's so enormous and looks like a tree from a fairy tale. I worked other signs of spring into this painting that I noticed during my residency at Wave Hill, such as the purple glory-of-the-snow flowers and hungry robins dotting the lawns.

Pictured above, from the top, courtesy of the artist:

Amy Lincoln, Landscape with Red Tulips, 2014, Acrylic on panel, 20" x 24".

Amy Lincoln, Blooming Cactus, 2013, Acrylic on panel, 19" x 14" inches.

Amy Lincoln, Copper Beech, 2015, Acrylic on panel, 36" x 24" inches.

Amy Lincoln, Tropical Still Life (Study), 2015, Acrylic on board, 10" x 6.75"

Amy Lincoln, As Yet, 2015, Acrylic on panel, 24" x 20".