

Artists Making Their Mark

There is a lot of superb art being made these days.
This column shines light on a trio of gifted individuals.



SARAH LAMB (b. 1971) is in thrall to the beauty of the physical world. She is captivated by the soft sheen of milk paint on an old door, by the crisp reflections in a silver vase, by the iridescence of a pheasant's wing. Surely Lamb's greatest strength as an artist is that she so strongly feels the emotional resonance of her subject, be it an old weathervane or a fresh-picked bouquet, that she can make viewers feel the same way she does.

Lamb's straightforward arrangements of objects cut straight to the heart of the matter; for her, beauty is enough. No hidden meanings need be sought out, and indeed she feels uncomfortable when people do so. "I really just love to paint what I see," she explains. David Major of New York City's Spanierman Gallery, where Lamb has exhibited successfully for several years, sees it slightly differently: "Just the way she sets, lights, and paints her still lifes conveys so much emotion. That's the deeper meaning of what she sees, and that's what people respond to."

Lamb has far more in her artistic arsenal than heightened sensitivity, however. Born in Petersburg, Virginia, she spent years developing her craft, studying with Ted Seth Jacobs in France for two years before joining Jacob Collins at his Water Street Atelier in New York City. She studied there for six years, living "hungry and happy," and it was there she met her husband, the portraitist David Larned. Three years ago the couple bought a historic farmhouse in Pennsylvania's scenic Brandywine Valley, where they now live and paint.

Lamb's home and studio are troves of the objects she loves to study and record. A small china cup crammed with Johnny Jump-Ups rests on a plank under a north-facing skylight. Nearby, a half-wilted arrangement of peonies and lilacs droops gracefully from a burnished silver pitcher. (Lamb's many paintings of peonies demonstrate her special affinity for their complex, ephemeral blossoms.)

SARAH LAMB (b. 1971)

OLIVES

2010, OIL ON LINEN, 6 x 14 3/4 IN.

SPANIERMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY

This has been an especially productive year for Lamb, who recently became a mother. Primarily known for still lifes, she has begun painting more landscapes *en plein air*, and she occasionally tackles the figure as well. All of these genres, including a few self-portraits, will appear in an upcoming solo show of almost 20 paintings at Connecticut's New Britain Museum of American Art (August 13-October 30). That exhibition's checklist will grow still larger at its next showing at Spanierman (November 10-December 10).

Lamb's work is entirely about what she finds beautiful. While her choice of subject matter is both traditional and timeless, the work has a distinct sensitivity and unusual warmth of spirit, qualities that speak directly to the viewer's heart. No words needed.

Text by Nancy Bea Miller

ROBIN HALL (b. 1953) is, like so many Californians, keenly aware of the crucial role light plays in how we see the world. Her mastery of lights and shadows is evident in every painting she makes, partly because she has painted *en plein air* so often, and partly because she grew up, and still lives, amid the sunlit scenery of Orange County.

Hall made art throughout her youth, thanks in large measure to her mother and grandmother, who both painted in oils. She entered Orange Coast College as an art major, but switched to the sciences and completed her studies at the University of California, Irvine.

The 9-to-5 rhythm of the regular work world did not appeal to Hall, however, so she turned back to art, first painting from photographs and magazine clippings. That approach led nowhere, so in 1993 she registered for a *plein air* workshop in Santa Fe and was transformed. The next year was spent painting entirely outdoors, and since then she has sharpened her eye and hand through study with such masters as Doug Higgins, Kevin Macpherson, Sebastian Capella, Dan Gerhartz, Laura Robb, and Carolyn Anderson.

