

AMERICAN REALISM: An Introduction

(Re-al-ism, n., in art & literature, the attempted picturing of people and things as they really are; effort at faithful reproduction of nature: see also naturalism.)

Art historian Linda Nochlin has argued that contemporary American realism is best described in terms of the artists' attitude to the external world. On one hand there are those who work in the realism mode who hold that phenomenological information -- subject matter from the real world -- is the basis of art. On the other are those who are primarily involved with translating that information into pictorial terms. However, Miss Nochlin finds that though these two groups propound radically different aesthetics, both groups view "the visual perception of things in the world as necessary for the basis of the structure of the pictorial field".

At the same moment, Realism is very much in favor with the international art world. As John Russell writes "Among current one-man exhibitions in New York, the most distinguished is the show of paintings by Giorgio Morandi at the Guggenheim Museum. And you can't get much closer to most people's idea of realism than by spending your life painting jugs and vases, over and over".

However, "Realism" by itself can never produce a considerable art. This fact was recognized in 1817 when realism and idealism were viewed as irreconcilable opposites. Samuel Taylor Coleridge dispelled that view when he wrote "It is only idealism as it is at the same time, the truest and most binding realism". John Russell adds that as the author of "The Ancient Mariner", Coleridge could afford to talk about coexistences of that kind.

It was Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American no less, who threw down the gauntlet to Realism. "Let us replace sentimentalism by realism, and dare to uncover those simple and terrible laws which, be they seen or unseen, pervade and govern."

And it is in these words of Emerson that one is able to discover what contemporary American Realism is all about. Americans place great importance on the material universe, and the current proliferation of images, facts and statistics. America is now in the period of "instant replay". We are shown a "replay" of a touchdown or an attempted assassination over and over again. So much so that our mind takes over and creates the realism of the event in its own terms, even to our own version of the governing laws which caused it. So it is with today's American realists. They deal with "things in the world". And as Alex Katz points out, "Their art, like their world, has its own particular kind of information and energy".

Yet in any endeavor of considerable art, the work must finally stand on its own totality. And realism is just one of many elements in a compound art. The gray fox of Scott Gentling may look like a gray fox, but did ever a gray fox look like that of Scott Gentling's?

THE OLD JAIL FOUNDATION ALBANY, TEXAS

An Exhibition Of The Work Of:

SCOTT GENTLING STUART GENTLING

February 13 through May 2, 1982

The Gentling Exhibition was organized in cooperation with The New Gallery of Fort Worth

SCOTT GENTLING, American, (1942-)

1. "Creek Bed", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Mr. and Mrs. J.C. Pace, Jr., Fort Worth)
2. "Gray Day", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Ernest Allen, Jr., Fort Worth)
3. "Ducks on the High, Wide, & Handsome", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Dr. & Mrs. James Holmes, Fort Worth)
4. "Airing Out", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Dr. & Mrs. James Holmes, Fort Worth)
5. "Shell", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Mr. & Mrs. James R. Blake, Fort Worth)
6. "Up-Draft", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Mr. & Mrs. J. Olcott Phillips, Fort Worth)
7. "The Survivor", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of The Continental National Bank, Fort Worth)
8. "Salt Lick", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Mr. & Mrs. J. Walker Holland, Fort Worth)
9. "Sunday Morning", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of S. Foster Yancey, Jr., Dallas)
10. "On the Line", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of S. Foster Yancey, Jr., Dallas)
11. "Erath County", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of S. Foster Yancey, Jr., Dallas)
12. "99th Meridian", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Brooks Bell, Jr., Carrollton)
13. "Siesta", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of James J. Meeker, Fort Worth)
14. "Jim", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of James J. Meeker, Fort Worth)
15. "Lost & Found", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Ted B. Bevan, Fort Worth)
16. "Clemmie", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Trammel Crow, Dallas)
17. "Strangers", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Mr. & Mrs. John G. Truelson, Fort Worth)
18. "Male Gray Fox", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Lucile M. Brittingham, Fort Worth)

19. "Horse Waiting", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of The New Gallery, Fort Worth)

20. "Peter", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of P. Gill, San Antonio)

STUART GENTLING, American (1942-)

21. "The Blue Bowl", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Private Collection)

22. "Twin Chimneys", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Mr. & Mrs. J. Olcott Phillips, Fort Worth)

23. "Martha's Vineyard", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of S. Foster Yancey, Jr., Dallas)

24. "Winter Onions", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Richard W. Moncrief, Fort Worth)

25. "Snow Scene", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Richard W. Moncrief, Fort Worth)

26. "Kentucky Rifle", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Brooks Bell, Jr., Carrollton)

27. "Sharpshooter", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Dr. & Mrs. David M. Beyer, Fort Worth)

28. "Equinox", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Mr. & Mrs. William K. Gordon, Jr., Fort Worth)

29. "Snow Geese", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Ted B. Bevan, Fort Worth)

30. "Shore Dweller", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Ted B. Bevan, Fort Worth)

31. "Apples & Leaves", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of Lucile Brittingham, Fort Worth)

32. "Watt Reynolds' Longhorn", dry brush watercolor, (Loan: Collection of The New Gallery, Fort Worth)

33. "Home Place", pencil drawing, Old Jail Foundation Collection

34. "Old County Jail, Albany", pencil drawing, Old Jail Foundation Collection

35. "Swing Tree", pencil drawing, Old Jail Foundation Collection