

# **TWO PAINTERS**

Jo Ann Rothschild & Elizabeth Yamin



Jo Ann Rothschild, 4-24-2015, 2015, Oil on linen, 26" x 30"

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January 19 - February 26, 2016

Salena Gallery

First Floor

Library Learning Center

Long Island University Brooklyn

1 University Plaza

Brooklyn, NY 11201



From Left: Elizabeth Yamin, *Low Tide*; Jo Ann Rothschild, *2-14-2014*; Jo Ann Rothschild, *5-24-2013*; Elizabeth Yamin, *Dismantling: Inner Voices*

## Two Painters

My first impression on seeing this beautifully installed exhibition at the Salena Gallery of Long Island University was one of visceral pleasure at the profusion of color, lines and shapes. One can hardly imagine two artists whose work is more compatible than Jo Ann Rothschild and Liz Yamin. This is true in spite their work being informed by very different ideas, by different processes, and certainly by the different relationships the artists have to paint and to the brush.

The 60ft. rounded gallery wall, on which the paintings of the two artists alternate, gives the viewer an insight into their processes and perceptions. This curved wall insists on a journey of looking. Starting at one end and walking around it, each painting becomes a rest stop for the eyes. Two large paintings on the flat wall of the gallery complement each other perfectly, yet give clear information on each artist's approach to painting, on what seems important to her, and what her inner and her outer eye see.

Rothschild's paintings are, for me, a visual presentation of emotional ambiguity; they convey this with unambiguous force. The work seems to know that everything is in flux, that nothing is definite, that the search goes on. Frequently, primary colors try to hold on to territory, only to be overshadowed by a small dab of grey or some other muddy color. These are alluring paintings, and the longer one looks at them, the more they let one know about one's own complicated emotional reactions.

Yamin's paintings, on the contrary, have their feet on the ground. They are decisive and in the present. Strong shapes and definite colors know their boundaries and yet dance around each other as if nothing else mattered. Yamin paints the urban surroundings she sees from her studio; on her canvases these are transformed into exciting, abstract environments.

The layout of the gallery space also accommodates a wonderful section of more intimate work. Rothschild's small paintings are a pleasure to examine closely, allowing the viewer to catch the nuances of color, small strokes, and seemingly incidental marks. A series of drawings she made during the last months of her mother's life take up the wall adjoining the small paintings. These drawings are tender and without anxiety at the approaching death--just a pen, observing. In one, the old woman looks straight at the viewer with a questioning, almost shrewd look in her eyes, knowing more than she tells.

The human has a real presence in Rothschild's work, sometimes subtly incorporated into the colors, swirls, and other shapes, and sometimes forthright, like an arm or a smile. It is the aliveness of her work that one remembers with pleasure.

Six vibrant paintings by Yamin hang on the wall catty-cornered to the drawings. They so plainly say that life is still here, an essence in Yamin's work. All of her paintings are alive with the energy that comes from feeling the movement of the paint. Even though her narrative is abstract, the delightful gesticulation of swirls, shapes and even straight edges seamlessly translates into the warmth of human connection.

*Hanne Tierney, Director of Five Myles Gallery*

Special thanks: Nancy Grove, Director of the Salena Gallery

Installation and Yamin Images: Kevin Noble

*Dismantling: Inner Voices* Image: Elizabeth Yamin

Rothschild Images: Clements Photography and Design

Catalogue Design: Shazzi Thomas



From Left: Elizabeth Yamin, *Under the Ice*; Jo Ann Rothschild, *Speed*; Elizabeth Yamin, *"The shapes arise..."*; Jo Ann Rothschild, *My World*



Jo Ann Rothschild, 1-29-2014, 2014, Oil on canvas, 16" x 20"



Jo Ann Rothschild, 3-4-2015, 2015, Oil on canvas, 84" x 96"



Elizabeth Yamin, *Dismantling: Inner Voices*, 2014-15, Oil on canvas, triptych, overall 30" x 57"



Elizabeth Yamin, *Flotsam*, 2015, Oil on canvas, 32" x 27"



Elizabeth Yamin, *Tinker's Garden*, 2010-13, Oil on canvas, triptych, overall 54" x 102"



Jo Ann Rothschild, *6-18-2014*, 2014, Oil on canvas, 24" x 36"



Jo Ann Rothschild, *1-26-2015*, 2015, Oil on canvas, 10" x 20"





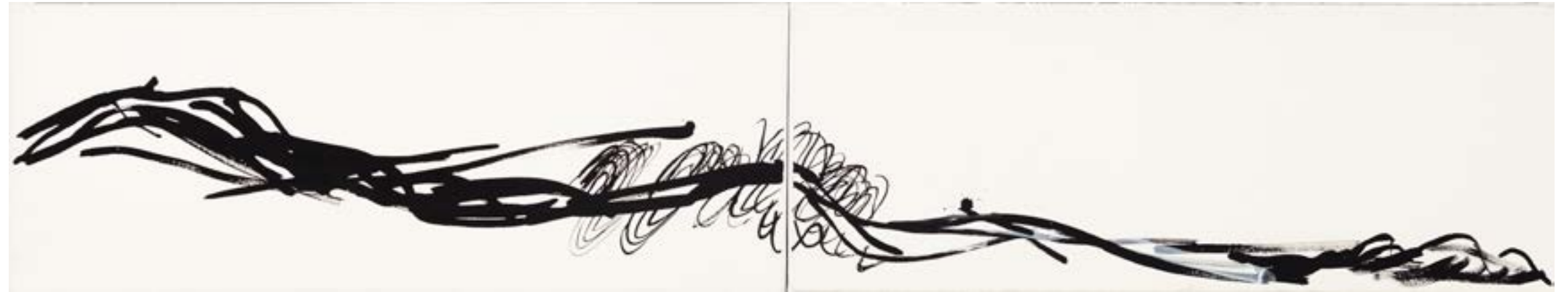
Jo Ann Rothschild, *2-12-2014*, 2014, Oil on linen, 26" x 30"



Jo Ann Rothschild, *After Mack*, 2013, Oil on linen, 26" x 30"



Elizabeth Yamin, *Dark Water*, 2015, Oil on canvas, 32" x 27"



Elizabeth Yamin, *Under the Ice*, 2013, Flashe on paper, mounted on canvas, diptych, overall 11" x 60"



Jo Ann Rothschild, *Drawings of Ann Rothschild*, 2015, Ink on paper, Each 6" x 6"



Elizabeth Yamin, *Passing Robbins Reef Light*, 2015-16, Series of six, Acrylic, Flashe and pencil on paper, mounted on canvas, Each 30" x 22"

## Jo Ann Rothschild on Elizabeth Yamin

When Elizabeth Yamin was 10, she lived for a summer with three Cezanne watercolors. Living with extraordinary art changes the way one relates to one's inner eye. It sets a high standard. Yamin works for a long time before she accepts what she has done. The paintings here are resolved and confident. They use the light of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, where her studio is. Many of the forms are inspired by the industrial shapes she sees every day. At first glance her paintings seem finite and manageable, but they change as you look at them. They refer to forms we recognize as familiar, existing in our world as well as in the world of her paintings. We navigate through predictable if quirky space. With longer viewing, however, clarity recedes. Forms open. Paths between discrete elements compel attention. Where is one seemingly clear shape in relation to its neighbor? Is it on top, adjacent, under? Or is it part of a completely different space, an interruption? The viewer is not sure. In the multiples, there is often a question of continuity. How does a shape approach the edge of the canvas and what happens in the empty space between canvases. Sometimes a line continues unbroken from canvas to canvas, and sometimes a shape suddenly changes dimension as it continues. There is no spatial logic. There is only the rightness of the painter's choices. To me, this is the crux of her pictures. Yamin's paintings are about relationship, ambiguity and the emotional clarity of her own vision.

## Elizabeth Yamin on Jo Ann Rothschild

A shape demands its place while the canvas insists on its surface. Rothschild's large painting *My World* bears evidence of this conflict. The shapes proclaim: We are here! The paint dances and laughs: Where? The tumultuous emotion is only partly organized by the sharp lines and enclosed spaces. There is struggle, there is gestural excitement and there is a dynamic balancing-act of resolution. The juxtaposition of forms is calmer in *3/14/15*. There is a softening of color and a blurring of gesture. The large triangle pushes in and pulls outward while the rectangular patch gently holds the surface. Organic forms and colors of earth and of sky evoke a Whitmanesque seeking of self in nature. In the smaller paintings, the interplay between definition and indistinctness is handled with a subtle touch. The half circles, triangles and rectangles seem to inhabit a purely painterly universe where mood is fused with place. The white paintings raise the question of memory and permanence. The covering surface masks a mystery --we wonder how the marks and colors we see can inform us of what we don't see. We are balanced between then and now. Rothschild aptly titles many of her paintings with the date completed--for these works are indeed places in time. Their ambiguities exert a pull, and like memories, they gain in force when revisited.

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Elizabeth Yamin, *Low Tide*, 2016, Oil on canvas, 32" x 27"

