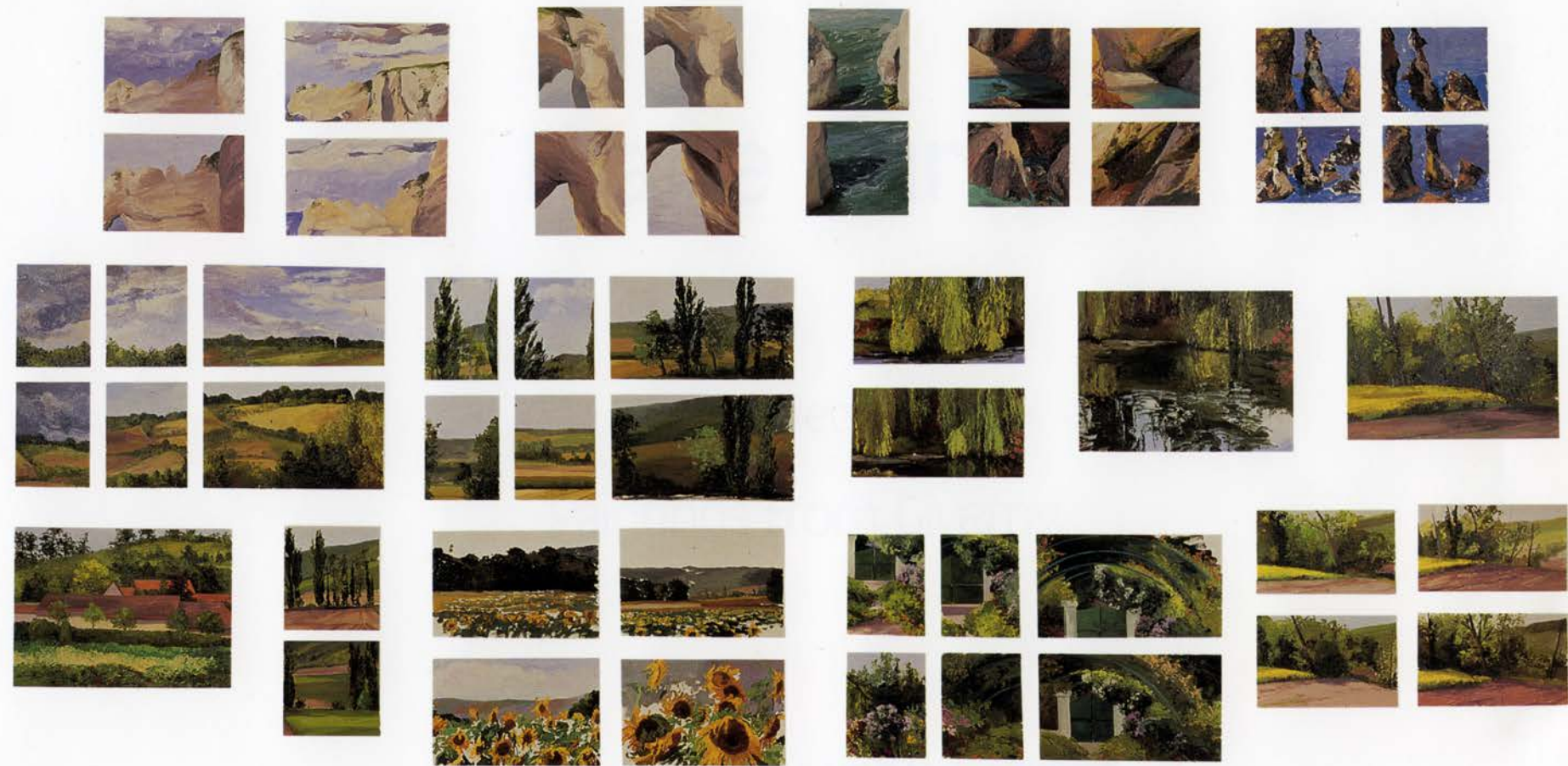


**Diane Burko**



*Studio Wall*, work completed in Giverny, France, April–October, 1989

# Diane Burko

Reflets

Paintings from Giverny

November 5-December 7, 1990

**MarianLocks** GALLERY

600 Washington Square South 215 629.1000  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
19106



*"Time, I think is the essential thing of this experience. Not time away so much as time for . . . Here I am in a situation where I can have time. Not so much to produce art – but time to reflect. To be a student. To be open to new experiences . . ."*

DIANE BURKO

June 8, 1989

*"Quand sur l'abîme un soleil se repose . . . Le Temps scintille et le Songe est savoir."*

*(When a sun rests above an abyss . . . Time shimmers, and Memory is knowledge)*

PAUL VALERY

1871–1945

## Real Painting: Reflections on the Paintings of Diane Burko

Real painting persists. Neither pseudo-painting nor conceptual photography, no matter how amusing or thought-provoking, will ever supplant this passionate art. What I call real painting of the representational kind – which is what I am focusing on here – is more about perception than about concept. This not to say that a real painting has no ideas; once we are seduced by the joy of paint on canvas and the joy of representation, everything is allowed. Yet, if truth be known, ideas in art are few, whereas the world revealed through the senses is vast and always changing. Furthermore, real painting as demonstrated by Diane Burko's work – whether plein air or studio, whether utilizing a combination of approaches appropriate to each new subject or situation – is not only about how a particular scene looks or is remembered, but also about the perception of paint, color, and form, and about the perception of perception. As paintings that are also pictures of landscapes that might otherwise be available to perception, Burko's works are also about the process of transcription or translations.

As someone with more than a passing interest in realist painting, I have known and appreciated Burko's work for a number of years. Outside of fashion, she has persisted and persevered, pursuing her vision of the landscape as a major vehicle of personal and formal expression. Her late '70s paintings of the Grand Canyon have an icy grandeur; her early '80s air views of Pennsylvania waterways push drawing towards the epic mode; her West Coast and Etretat cliff paintings of the late '80s offer a distinctly painterly energy and considerable compositional drama. Now, after a lengthy stay as artist-in-residence at Monet's Giverny, courtesy the Reader's Digest, Burko has achieved a new maturity. The paintings in this exhibition of recent work are remarkably complex.

The landscape seen from above continues to be Burko's major theme. This point of view moderates the effect of perspective on the picture plane, pushing sky towards the top of the canvas to allow more dynamic kinds of composition. Whether from an airplane, the top of a cliff, or most recently, the bank of Monet's pond, she explores the effects of water: how rivers and oceans have sculpted earth, and, in poetic contrast, how humanity has sculpted water in return – through dams in Pennsylvania and by the construction of water gardens in Normandy.

Superficially inspired by Earth Day, last spring there was a mini-fad for landscape painting in the New York art world. All it took was a few exhibitions and a little piece in the New York Times. You blinked and it was gone. There is indeed cause for concern when it comes to our disintegrating environment; in some sense, all landscapes in art take on the tonalities of the memorial. But all the landscape paintings in the world will not cancel out the greenhouse effect or save the Brazilian rain forest.

Burko was dedicated to the landscape long before it was fashionable. Why? I suspect that sentiment has nothing to do with it. Certainly trendiness is out of the question. Competition with and connection to a tradition of painting is the more likely cause. Then too, landscape as subject permits a degree of abstraction that other subjects might deny. Composition is not obscured by faces, bodies, stories or psychology. Allegory – art's dirty little secret – is deeply concealed, the better to affect the emotions.



Of course paintings in this current exhibition are of subjects that will be familiar to all who know the late paintings of the master impressionist Claude Monet: his gardens at Giverny, the French countryside and the Brittany coastline. Burko is being quite daring. Yet, no one familiar with Monet's work would mistake Burko's water-lily pond for his. If one looks at the great Monet Nymphaeas painting of 1920 in the collection of New York's Museum of Modern Art, there appears to be a kind of all-over, underpainting, almost as if the artist had primed the canvas with a texturizing paint roller. This all-overness, complemented by a close-valued tonality, is what appealed to the post-second World War taste that was coming to grips with Jackson Pollack. Suddenly the late paintings of Monet were not merely "decorative" or the work of an artist with failing eyesight, but advanced: they corresponded in a formal way with Greenbergian aesthetics. Burko's water-lily ponds, on the other hand, are full of contrasts, tranquility is not necessarily her aim, but instead, a kind of action. Her fields are not Color Fields; her ponds have depth.

When Burko won the Reader's Digest competition to take up residency at Giverny, she looked forward to revisiting the Normandy coast she had painted the year before, already tracing Monet's campaigns. Little did she suspect that during her six-month's stay she would fall increasingly under the spell, not only of the countryside surrounding Giverny, but also of Monet's gardens and pond. Perhaps more significantly, she began painting the landscape directly, rather than as in the past as mediated by photography. From these oil sketches and photographs, much like Monet in his later years, she has composed larger paintings in the studio.

Burko's new paintings are not paintings of Monet's paintings, but paintings of what he painted. I can think of no equivalent in contemporary art. Certainly no one has repainted Van Gogh's fields, orchards, or cypress trees. Most likely they no longer exist. Has anyone made new paintings of Edward Hopper's Lighthouses?

To further complicate matters, Monet constructed his gardens and pond at Giverny in order to paint them. Are they the same gardens now that they have been restored? The conundrums, both trivial and philosophical, are many. It is however, the fine points that are the point: Burko's angles of view, paint-handling, palette, and very different sense of composition – even her sense of light – are not at all like Monet's. Here we do not find an old man's dreamy tranquility. As in most of Burko's landscape, there is structure and agitation. She is in love with space. In short, although far calmer than her rocky coasts, Burko's water-lily ponds are Burkos and not Monets. Look closely; there are battles going on.

In no sense is Burko's paint-handling "allover." Paintings such as the two panel *Reflets I & II* and *Reflets III & IV* are as much about contrasts of paint application as they are about reflections. The wall and section of the house at the top of the former uses geometry to anchor the viewer in real space; the shadows at the right and left of the latter have the effect of deepening the water and raising the sky, while pulling us back to the off center clump of flowers. Burko's space is realist rather than impressionist. Hers is not the flattened space of decoration – which in later Monet is glorious – but rather the space of concrete relationships articulated by vertical doublings and reversals. Her paintings are as much about sky as about water.

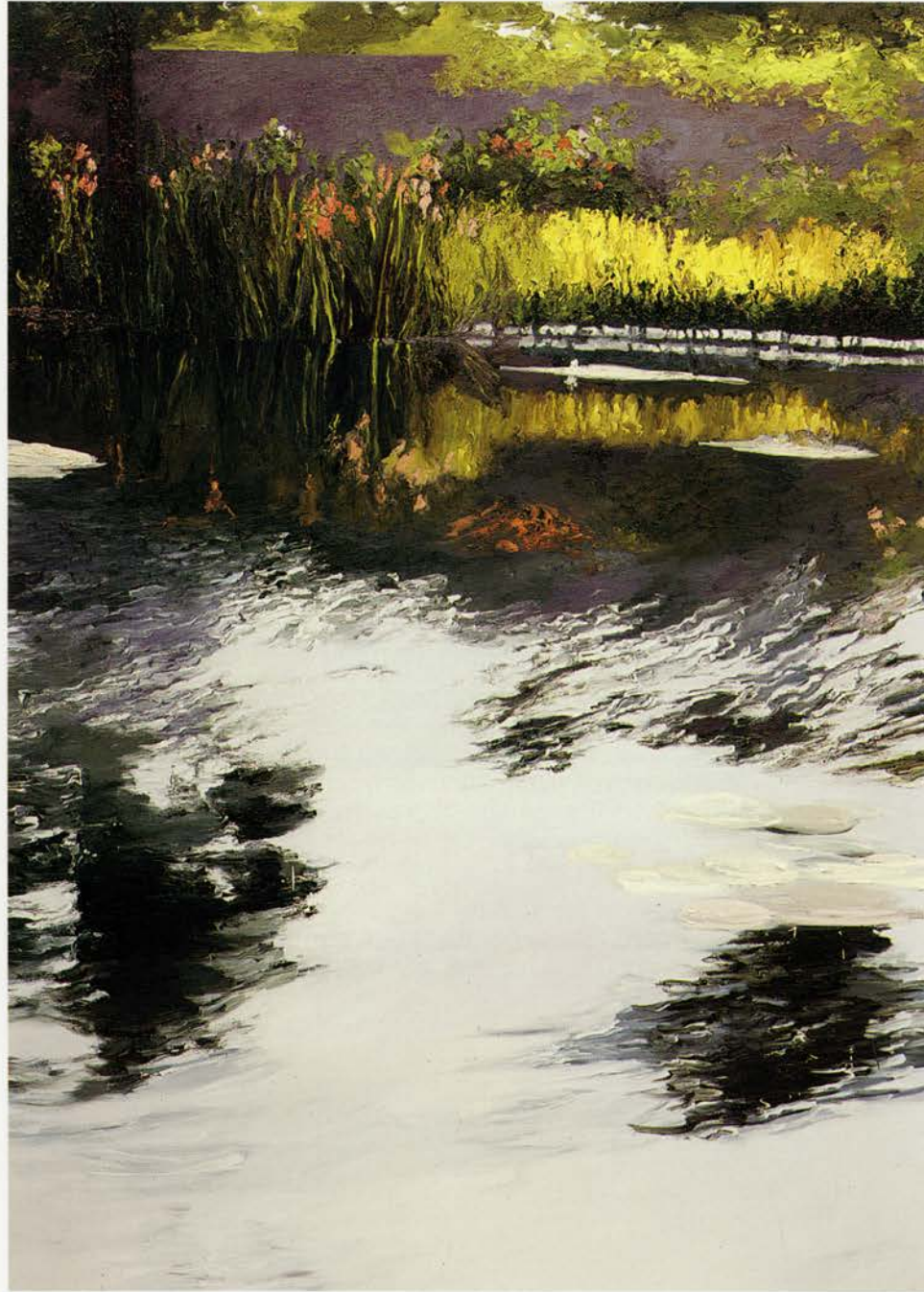
Is this work post modern? If postmodernism in art means the ironic use of historical quotation or pastiche to challenge notions of masterpieces, originality and modernism itself, then Burko's work does not fall into this category. Her paintings are not parodies of Monet's, nor do they quote directly. Furthermore, Burko has not indicated in any way, either through conversation, writings, or the works themselves, that she is attempting to be critical of what the postmodernists assume to be modernist principles. To the degree that her paintings are about Monet's, they are in homage.

Burko will be around long after "postmodernism" has lost its bite. One does not become an important realist painter overnight; Burko is one now and she is not going away. Her new work is lush and challenging. It is real painting.

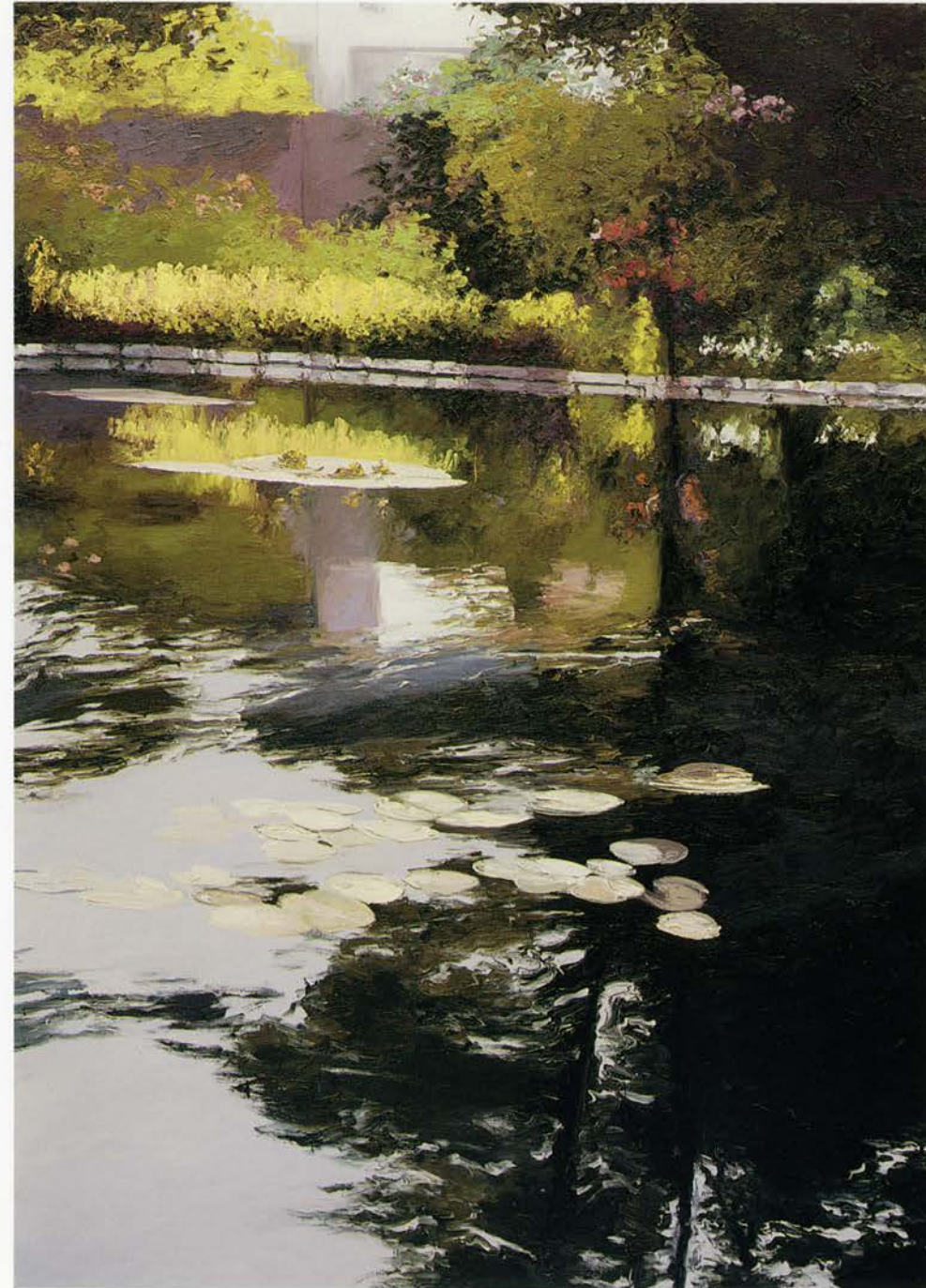
JOHN PERREAULT



*Reflets I*, May 1990 Oil on Canvas, 84 x 60 inches



*Reflets II*, June 1990 Oil on Canvas, 84 x 60 inches





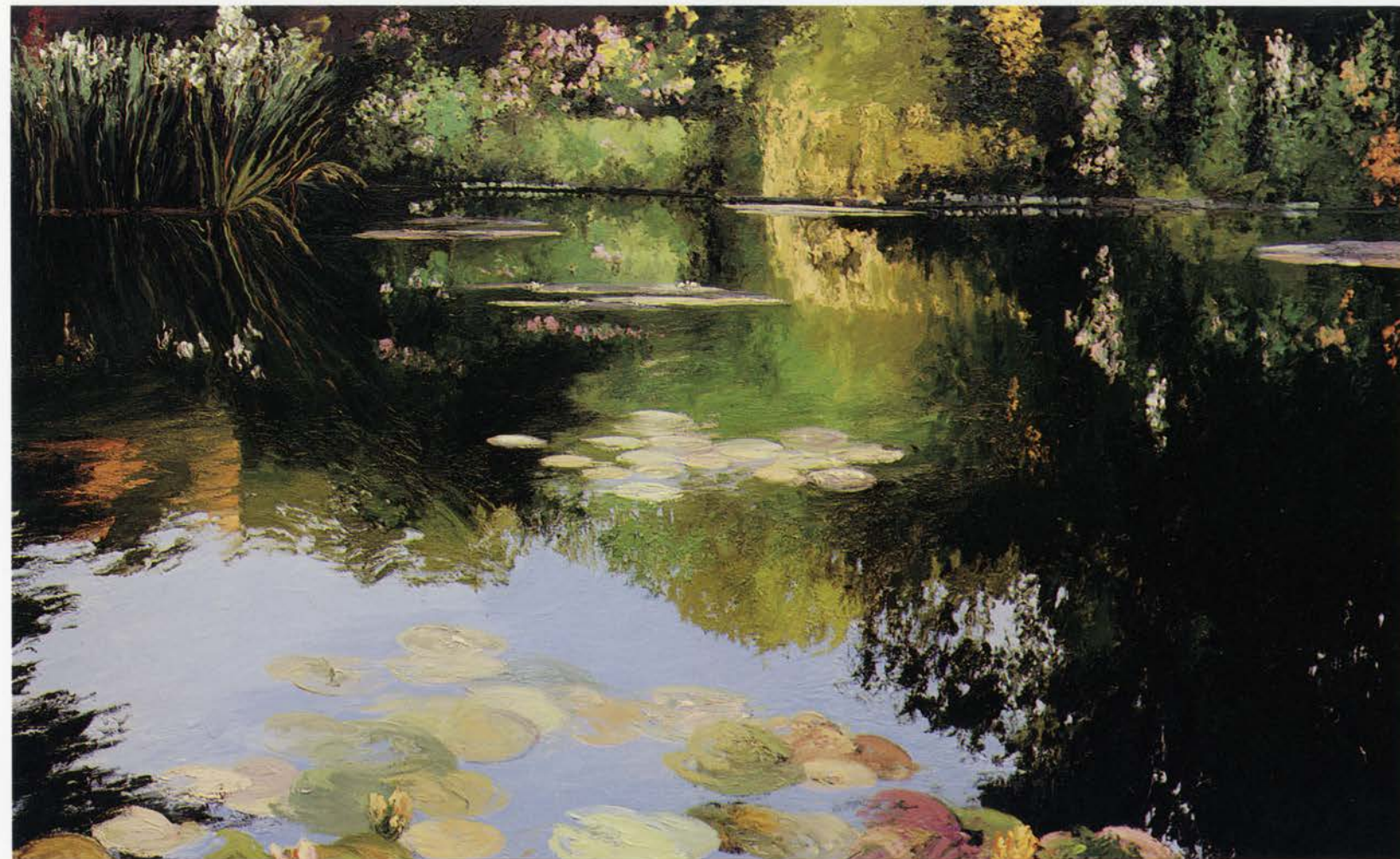
***Nymphéas #1***, July–October 1889 Oil on Canvas, 65 x 92 inches







*Reflets III*, August, 1990 Oil on Canvas, 60 x 98 inches



*Reflets IV*, July, 1990 Oil on Canvas, 60 x 98 inches





*Saule Pleureur – Printemps*, June–October 1989 Oil on Arches Paper, 37 x 68 inches







*Après-midi*, March–May 1990 Oil on Canvas, 84 x 60 inches





## Solo Exhibitions

- 1990 Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA  
 1988 Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA  
 1987 Hollins College, Roanoke, VA, *1972–87, 15 Years*  
 1983 *Waterways of Pennsylvania*, traveled to: Everhart Museum, Scranton, PA; Westmoreland County Museum of Art, Westmoreland, PA; Museum of Art, Penn State University, College Park, PA; Reading Public Museum, Reading, PA; Allentown Art Museum, Allentown, PA; and Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA  
 1982 Douglas College, New Brunswick, NJ  
 Stefanotti Gallery, New York City  
 1980 The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Morris Gallery, Philadelphia, PA  
 Stefanotti Gallery, New York City  
 Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA  
 1979 Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY, *First Distinguished Alumni Award Exhibition*  
 Genesis Galleries, Ltd., New York City  
 1977 Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ  
 1976 Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA  
 O. K. Harris Gallery, New York City, *Showcase*  
 1973 Philadelphia Art Alliance, Philadelphia, PA  
 1972 Chatham College, Pittsburgh, PA  
 1971 College of Textiles and Science, Philadelphia, PA

## Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1990 Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, *Art Now, Artists Choose Artists*  
 1989 The Watson Gallery, Houston, TX, *Invitational Exhibition Hard Choices/Just Rewards*, traveled to: Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, Blair Art Museum, Hollidaysburg, PA; Johnstown Art Museum, Johnstown, PA; Levy Gallery at Moore College of Art, Philadelphia, PA  
 Espace Culturel de Saint-Germain-des-Angles, Evreux, FRANCE, *Confluence-Juin*  
 1988 The Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY, *The Luther W. Brady Collection, 20th-Century Works on Paper*  
 Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA, *Perspectives, PA*  
 Joan Hodgel Gallery, Sarasota, FL, *A Sense of Place*  
 Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, Loretto, PA, *The Face of the Land*  
 1986 Elaine Benson Gallery, East Hampton, NY, *The Water Color Show*  
 Maryland Art Institute, *Artists and the Print*  
 Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, FL, *The American Southwest*  
 1985 The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, *A Decade of Visual Arts at Princeton: Faculty 1975–1985*  
 Armstrong Gallery, New York City, *Gallery Group*  
 Denver Museum of Natural History, *Grand Canyon Revisited*  
 1984 Mabel Smith Douglass Library Gallery, Rutgers/Douglass College, New Brunswick, NJ, *Women Artist Series, It's History*

- 1983 Armstrong Gallery, New York City, *Works on Paper Contemporary Landscape Painting*, traveled to: Freedman Gallery, Albright College, Reading, PA; Center for the Arts (Zilkha Gallery), Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT; Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA  
 Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, Loretto, PA, *Painters of the Pennsylvania Landscape*  
 Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, *Perspectives on Contemporary American Realism, Works on paper from the collection of Jalane and Richard Davidson*  
 1982 Everhart Museum, Scranton, PA, *Summer Invitational*  
 Stefanotti Gallery, New York City, *Realism in the Grand Style*  
 Mitzi Landau Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, *New York Selections*  
 1981 Print Club of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA, *57th Annual International Competition, Professional Prize Award*  
 Whitney Museum of American Art, Fairfield County Branch, Stamford, CT, *The American Landscape: Recent Developments*  
 Taft Museum, Cincinnati, OH, *Contemporary Landscape Painting*  
 Carson/Shapiro Gallery, Denver, CO, *A Colored Pencil, Invitational*  
 Heydt/Bair Gallery, Santa Fe, NM, *Landscape Interpretations*  
 Suzanne Brown Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ, *National Invitational Women's Show*  
 1980 Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA, *A Tribute to the Print Club: 65th Anniversary Exhibition*  
*Visitors to Arizona: 1846 to Present*, traveled to: Phoenix Museum of Art, Phoenix, AZ; Tucson Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ  
 1979 Stedman Art Gallery, Rutgers University, Camden, NJ, *Rutgers National Drawing Exhibition, Purchase Prize*  
 Philadelphia College of Art, Philadelphia, PA, *Painting and the Photograph*  
 1978 Root Art Center, Hamilton College, Clinton, NY, *This is Today*  
 The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA, *Contemporary Drawings*  
 1977 Summit Art Center, Summit, NJ, *Twenty Landscape Painters*  
 Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT, *Contemporary Reflections*  
 Queensborough Community College, Bayside, NY, *Contemporary Landscape, Image and Idea*  
 Woman's Building, Los Angeles, CA, *Contemporary Issues: Works on Paper by Women*  
 DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA, *Boston Printmakers Annual*  
 Miami University, Oxford, OH, *Drawing and Prints, '77*  
 Iranian American Society Galleries, Tehran, Iran, *Art-Today, USA*  
 1976 Beaver College, Glenside, PA, *Invitational Drawing Show*  
 Museum of Art, Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA, *Prints by Pennsylvania Artists*  
 Pyramid Gallery, Washington, DC, *Philadelphians in Washington*  
 1975 Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx, NY, *Year of the Woman*  
 Graphics I and II Gallery, Boston, MA, *Six Views on the Landscape*  
 Glassboro State College, Glassboro, NJ, *Ten Artists Look at the Landscape*  
 1974 Museum of the Philadelphia Civic Center, Philadelphia, PA, *Woman's Work, 1974*  
 1973 University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, *Eight Women Realists*  
 Museum of the Philadelphia Civic Center, Philadelphia, PA, *Earth Art, 1973*  
 Washington and Jefferson College, Washington, PA, *National Painting Show*  
 1972 Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA, *New Faces*  
 Philadelphia Museum of Art, Fleischer Art Memorial, Philadelphia, PA, *Painting and Photography, Something in Common*  
 1971 Beaver College, Glenside, PA, *Burko, Hansen*  
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- A Decade of Visual Arts at Princeton: Faculty 1975–1985*, The Art Museum, Princeton University, Allen Rosenbaum, Illust., 1985
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CIGNA Corporation, Philadelphia, PA  
Commodities Corporation of America, NY  
Continental Bank, Philadelphia, PA  
DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA  
Denver National Bank, Denver, CO  
First Pennsylvania Bank, Philadelphia, PA  
FMC Corporation, Philadelphia, PA  
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IBM, Tucson, AZ  
Ken Parker and Associates, Philadelphia, PA  
Mobil Oil Company, Washington, DC  
Petro-Lewis Corporation, Denver, CO  
The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA  
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA  
Reading Public Museum, Reading, PA  
Rutgers University Collection, Stedman Art Gallery, Camden, NJ  
Security Pacific National Bank, CA  
Smith, Kline and French, Philadelphia, PA  
The Prudential Insurance Company of America, Valley Forge, PA  
University of New Mexico, Tamarind Collection, Albuquerque, NM  
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Nominee for the AVA (Awards in the Visual Arts), 1990, 1989, 1984, 1981  
Residence Fellowship at Giverny, Readers Digest Foundation, April–September, 1989  
Institute of Contemporary Art, "Patron Print" Artist–1989  
Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Individual Artists Grant, 1989, 1981  
National Endowment for the Arts Grant, 1985–86  
Visiting Artist Grant, Artists for the Environment Foundation, Walpack, NJ, May, 1983  
Visiting Fellowship to Tamarind Institute, Albuquerque, NM, November, 1982, 1980  
Visiting Fellowship to the Print Research Facility at Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, December, 1981  
The Print Club of Philadelphia, 57th International Competition, Professional Prize, 1981  
Purchase Prize, Rutgers University National Drawing Show, 1979  
Purchase Prize to the DeCordova Museum, DeCordova Museum, Boston Printmakers 29th Annual, 1977

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**ML**