

PAINTED LANDSCAPES

Contemporary Views

LAUREN P. DELLA MONICA



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LISA BRESLOW

(B. 1957)

Lisa Breslow, trained at the School of Visual Arts and the Art Students League in New York, paints the softer side of New York City, even when her subject is a gritty, urban street. Her cityscapes have an appealing warmth as well as a formal, structural integrity that is pleasing in its simplicity. Evocative of places, times, and moods rather than mired in specificity, typical urban moments become timeless at Breslow's hand.

Structurally, Breslow composes her paintings with an underlying framework of straight-edged lines and classical, geometric organization that draws the viewer's eye to the center of the canvas. The combination of strength, provided by these directional, crisp lines, and the ethereal lightness of Breslow's feathery brushmarks on the canvases lends the works their pleasing yet subtle complexity. Whether in her urban landscapes or her still lifes of simple flowers on a ledge, Breslow beautifully renders the subject matter in soft shades of color, oftentimes even allowing them to be pretty.

Breslow has been referred to as a tonalist painter for her beautifully colored, glowing landscapes that are both moody and evocative in effect. In recent years, she has come to paint harder-edged cityscapes as well, abstract examinations of spatial concepts. In *West Village, Greenwich Street* (Fig. 15), Breslow paints the street from the perspective of a pedestrian, at ground level, surrounded by cars, buildings, and other people. The painting seems to read grey in color at first glance, but a closer review shows tonal variations of blues, greens, and reds incorporated into the painting's color scheme, thereby creating a warmth and vibrancy in the composition. The lines of the buildings and streetlights echo the straight lines of the trees overhanging the roadway. There is moodiness in both the grey-toned color palette and the soft focus in the brushwork as space recedes into the distance and where Breslow injects a painterly quality to the work in the less finished areas of the painting.

Breslow's muse for many of her cityscapes has been Manhattan's Central Park. The juxtaposition of urban environment and green space allows Breslow to combine the geometry of the city architecture with the softer lines of the natural elements of land and water. In Figures 16 and 17, for example, Breslow renders the sunlight's reflections structurally as if they were independent forms. The artist's decision to align the horizon—the point at which the water and land would meet sky in the distance—with the natural center of the canvas creates balanced and pleasing compositions. Opposing vertical and horizontal lines in the compositions accentuate the effect of harmonious equilibrium. The volume of the reflections on the surface of the water presents a mirror image of equal weight to the skyline in the lower register of the sky.

Breslow lives and works in New York City. She has received two Pollock-Krasner Foundation grants and she won the S.J. Wallace Truman Prize at the National Academy Museum, New York. She has been exhibiting her work since 1986 and had her first solo exhibition in New York in 1988. Her work is found in many fine public and private collections. She is represented by Kathryn Markel Fine Arts, New York.



Fig. 15: Lisa Breslow. *West Village, Greenwich Street*, 2012. Oil and pencil on panel: 24 x 24 inches.
Courtesy of Kathryn Markel Fine Arts.



Fig. 16: Lisa Breslow. *Central Park Lake 2*, 2012. Oil and pencil on panel: 16 x 12 inches.
Courtesy of Kathryn Markel Fine Arts.



Fig. 17: Lisa Breslow. *Central Park Lake 3*, 2012. Oil and pencil on panel: 16 x 12 inches.
Courtesy of Kathryn Markel Fine Arts.