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‘Bay and Borough’

By Bart Charlow
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Pamela Walsh Gallery has collected outstanding examples of urban paintings for its “Bay and Borough” exhibit, through Dec. 5.

Andrew Faulkner’s large color-field studies, shown in previous solo exhibitions, often depict semiabstract Northern California landscapes. Here they are eclipsed by two of his urban impressionist paintings.

“Golden Bay” and “Fillmore View” show indistinct boxy buildings, streets sloping toward the Bay horizon and a colorful sky in pastel shades. You very likely will recognize the actual settings, though I suspect they mimic many Bay Area sites.

Dimitri Cavander’s paintings cleave to realism, yet their underlying structure is abstract. Looking to my eyes like Wayne Thiebaud’s San Francisco urban pieces, they don’t share

his working multicolored edges, but those strong color, repetitive shapes moving toward the distance bear a similarity.

“Subdivisions: Skyline by Westridge” draws the eye up a Daly City street, pastel houses and cars receding into the sky. If you remember “Little Boxes Made of Ticky-Tacky,” you’ll get the idea, but here they do have a bit of life.

“Broadway to Battery” swoops down, then up the street to part of the San Francisco skyline on a sunny day. A cable car view of the city.

His “Unusual Vegetation” is a simple house portrait anywhere in the Avenues bracketed by greenery, but there’s something subtly skewed in the structures.

“Great Highway Near Taraval” is a simple low-viewpoint, horizontal sweep of colorful houses against a blue sky.

Larry Horowitz takes dark views and endows them with a sense of warm light. In “Storm over Empire State” the dark-gray sky contrasts with warm more neutral colored tops of the buildings in the skyline below. The contrast allows those buildings to show subtlety of shadow color.

His “Evening Lights,” with a similar dark sky projects a dark street-level scene. Again, those subtle colors in the shadows carry the weight, while very bright spots of signage and street lighting draw the eye down. There’s a Hopper-like quality to these New York noirs.

Carolyn Meyer paints urban scenes as flat shapes, detailed yet having an abstract quality. The perspective is somehow not lost by this technique. There is a Klimt- or Vuillard-like quality to how she handles the pattern of city structures.

“Distant Horizon” is an almost abstract impasto of colors.

“NYC Water Tower” and “Water Tower Skyline” flatten those structures against the background buildings. A seagull flies you into a barge beneath a bridge in “Harbor Passage.”Lisa Breslow takes us to New York City.

“Silver Mist” has a centered horizon line above which is a hazy abstract tree line topped by an indistinct skyline, which is reflected below in the water of the lake. Very moody.

“Crosswalk” is bottom-loaded with the perspective lines of the tall buildings and the sidewalk and lower street lines converging past a pedestrian, street trees and vehicles into the lower distance. Not hazy this time, so much as stylized.

My old painting companion, Jenny Wantuch, is showing three. I’m more accustomed to her landscapes from our plein-air paint-outs; here she shines in depicting urban scenes. She’s using flat, stylized shapes and colors to delight the eye, yet her strong perspectives create depth, rolling up and down San Francisco streets.

“Sunset Reflections” takes you up a street to the colorfully clouded sky. “Bay Breeze” converges in the middle, straight to the Bay and headlands beyond. “Stop” is the roller coaster view.

“I’m having fun bringing out colors you don’t see in nature,” Wantuch says, “The rhythm of the houses on the roads, moving the eye around.”

Many local shows feature our scenic landscapes. Walsh reminds us that our street scenes are no less intriguing.