



HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN

*New Paintings
and Prints
by Elizabeth Higgins*

FRONT COVER:

How the Light Gets In (detail)
2022, oil on canvas, 14 x 11 in.

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New Paintings and Prints
by Elizabeth Higgins

NOVEMBER 29–DECEMBER 24, 2022



PRINCE STREET GALLERY · 547 W 27 ST, NEW YORK NY



Solitude

2022, oil on canvas, 30 x 30 in.

Natural Perceptions

John Goodrich

As scientists tell us, colors exist only as neural activity within our minds. To be more specific, our visual systems – our eyes and mind, working in concert – interpret ratios of light wavelengths as varying colors; without a visual system, the light waves remain just that: frequencies of energy. But do we really need to know this? The colors we perceive feel decidedly *real*, and our perceptions of them are so rich and complex that some of us could spend a lifetime studying them.

This is, of course, precisely what an artist does. The painter who works from observation is reacquainting herself with all manner of visual events: the

radiant illumination of a lawn on a cloudless day, the deep, harshly delimited shadows on a building at noon, the soft, reflected light on the inner leaves of a tree's canopy. As toddlers, we learned to decipher all such incidents, large and small; since childhood, we have unthinkingly registered the wholesale contrast between indoor and outdoor light, as well as the subtlest changes in a table's surface at the base of a saltshaker.

Elizabeth Higgins is a painter clearly attuned to the workings of light. Stylistically, her paintings hit a sweet spot midway between abstraction and realism; her broadly limned forms seek a clarifying order, while her colors appeal to our deeply internalized expectations of light, lending tangible openness to expanses of air and water, and vitality to textures and contrasting details.

In, for instance, "Light on the Sound," the artist's hues – cool green, pale purple and ultramarine blue – evokes not only a moonlight night, but the drama of intervals: stretching sky, compression of groundplane (reinforced by a single, expeditious diagonal brushstroke), with the moonlit crest of a distant wave sounding the deep, space in-between. Light bestows presences, and distances become material.

In "Conversation," the broad expanses take another form. Warm, muted pinks establish the palpably intimate space of an interior, its wall punctuated by a sunlight-flooded window. Each hue is calibrated to the further the effect of light; reflections in the glazing of wall-hung artworks faintly echo the outdoor blaze, while the narrow windowsill sounds as the brightest note of all. Though relatively small in canvas-inches, a cluster of dense browns and purples looms large; they conjure two figures, separated by the table yet tangibly connected by their gestures, communicated through a remarkable efficiency of line and color. Meanwhile, clouds climb towards the top of the window frame, spelling out bit by bit the height and distance of the sky.

In "Julia Reading" the human subject relates to her environment in a completely different way in an interior illuminated by multiple light sources. Two lamps send smallish arcs of warm light across the purple surfaces of a bedroom's wall and sloping ceiling, while cool daylight pours through a window. Beneath these crosscurrents of light, a figure reads in bed, her arms – the most intensely warm notes of the painting – rising sturdily against the long horizontals of bed and windowsill.

Many of the artists' paintings and prints resonate with a kind of meditative stillness, but none more so than "Pilgrimage to St. Anne's, Fogo Island," which consists mostly of bands of earthy yellow-green and limpid blue-green. In this scene of a remote Canadian fishing village, only two elements oppose these streaming horizontals: the simple solidness of a church, and a lone figure, silhouetted against the vastness of water and sky. The artist and her daughters had visited the island following a family tragedy, the death of her 27-year-old son. Such a loss remains inexpressible in words or paint, but in this painting we can sense a profound solitude and resilience in the face of the fathomless.

Several paintings, all depicting a woman seated or standing before a window, evoke the nurturing embrace of light. In these, the figure's gaze through the window becomes our own. The planes of the walls and floor in "Woman at the Window" glow with softly reflecting light, an effect heightened by the vibrant, contrasting greens visible through the window.

Layers of optical experience unfold in another of these paintings, titled "Woman at Window." Here the figure is seated within the large frame of a window, the edges of her arm and skirt lit by sunlight, while most skintones take on a deep, shadowy ruddiness. Behind her form, a railing marks the division between intimate interior and exuberant outdoors. Perhaps a hundred feet beyond, a wall of vibrantly varying greens fills the entire aperture of the window – except, that is,

for a few terracotta-hued houses, peering from amidst the cacophony of green. Muted in their distance, these islands of warm pink converse with the deep reds of the figure, bridging their distant worlds.

Elizabeth Higgins' paintings remind us that "mere" colors, applied to a canvas, can re-making visual experiences to an extraordinary degree. The very act of framing a view, moreover, affords new means of quantifying and ordering the elements within, imparting human-scale understanding to the flood of visual information.

This is the felicitous paradox of painting, which of necessity starts out as flat, fixed manipulations of pigment. It finishes, sometimes, as an expression that's anything but flat and fixed. It can locate each object's presence, its character, even its *raison d'être* – a point amply borne out by Elizabeth Higgins' luminous paintings.

Light on Sound
2018, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in.



The Conversation
2020, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in.



Julia Reading
2018, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 in.





Above:

Pilgrimage to St. Anne's
2019, oil on canvas, 6 x 12 in.

Opposite:

Evening Light, Long Island Sound
2020, oil on canvas, 16 x 20 in.



Woman at Window
2021, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in.





ABOVE:

Reflection 2

2020, oil on canvas, 14 x 14 in.

OPPOSITE:

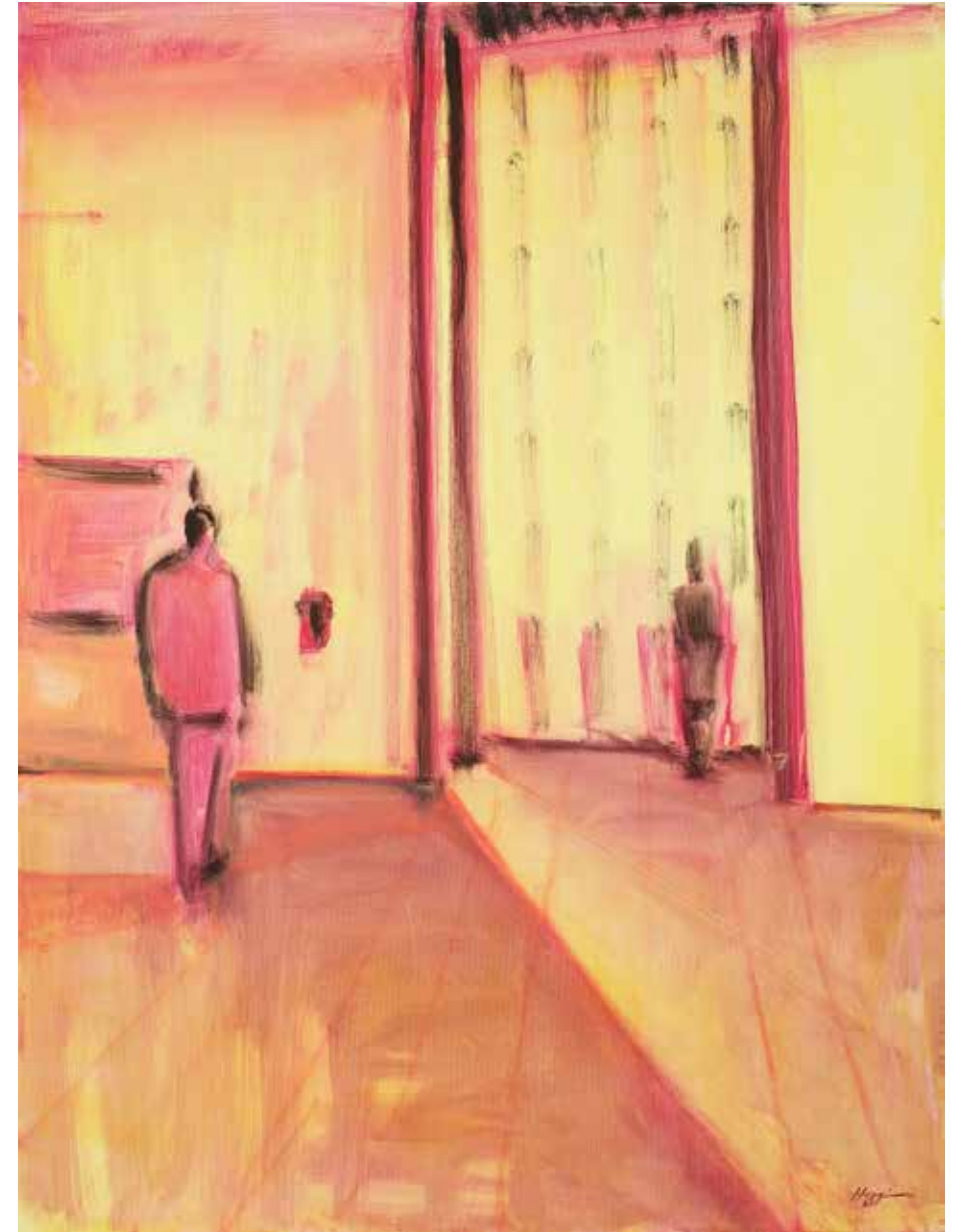
Yellow Tree by Shore

2022, monotype, 14 x 13 in.

Waiting
2022, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in.



Figures at the Museum
2022, oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in.





Woman at Window
2022, oil on canvas, 20 x 20 in.



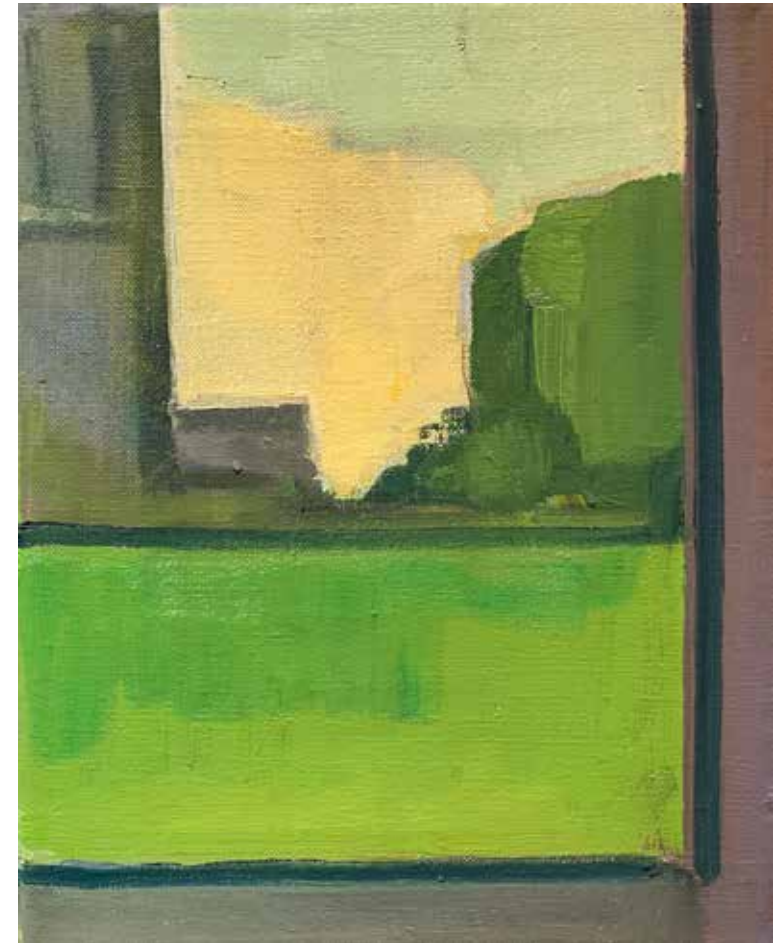
Verdant Landscape
2022, oil on canvas, 10 x 20 in.



Reflection
2021, oil on canvas, 10 x 20 in.

Towards the Sea
2022, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 in.





Yellow Light
2020, oil on canvas, 10 x 8 in.

OPPOSITE:

How the Light Gets In
2022, oil on canvas, 14 x 11 in.

Open Window
2020, oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in.



Looking Out at the Museum
2022, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in.





After Storm
2020, oil on canvas, 10 x 10 in.

OPPOSITE:
Leaving Westerly
2020, monotype, 12 x 12 in.



Woman at Window
2018, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in.

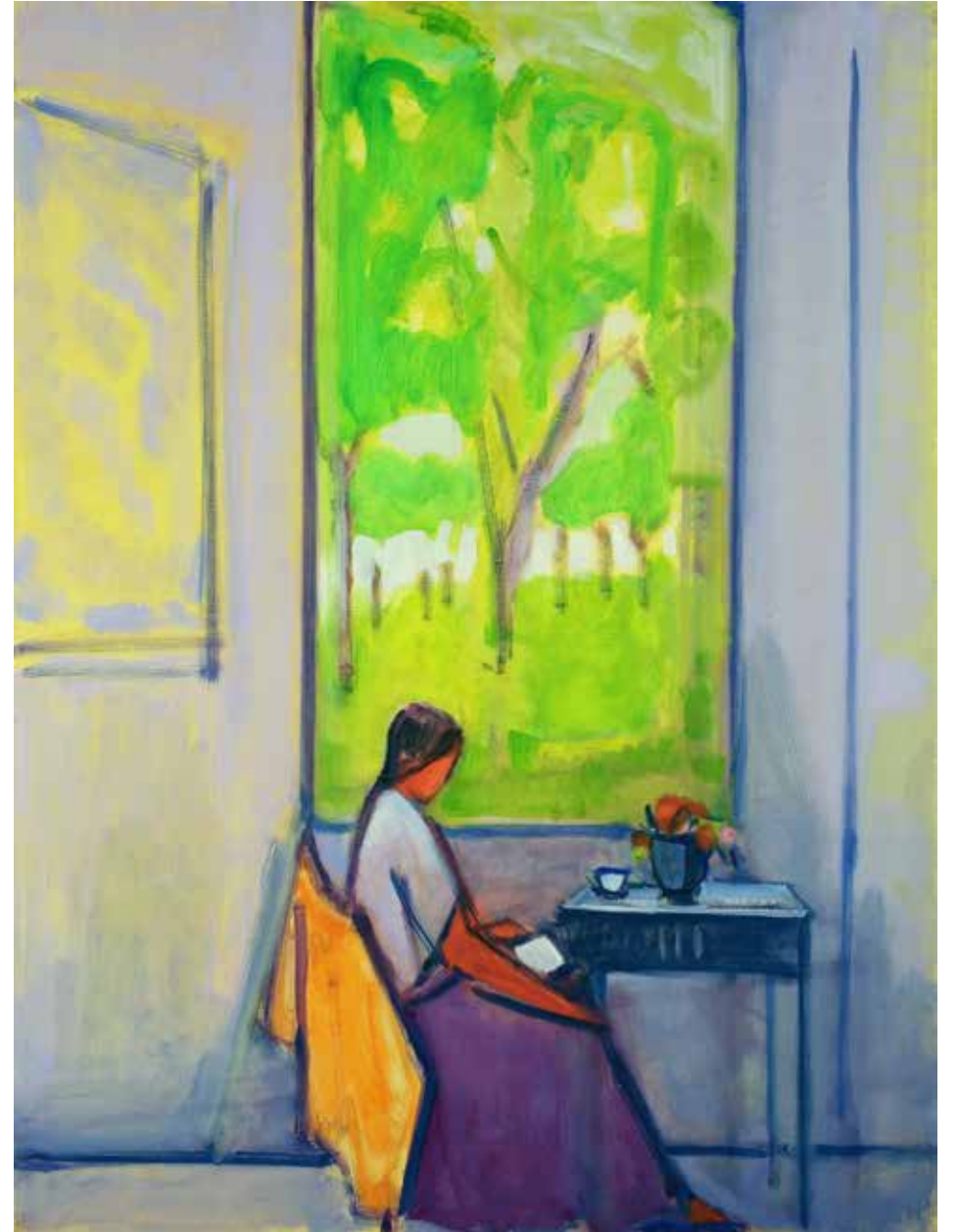


Figure by the Shore
2021, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in.



Something Found
2022, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in.





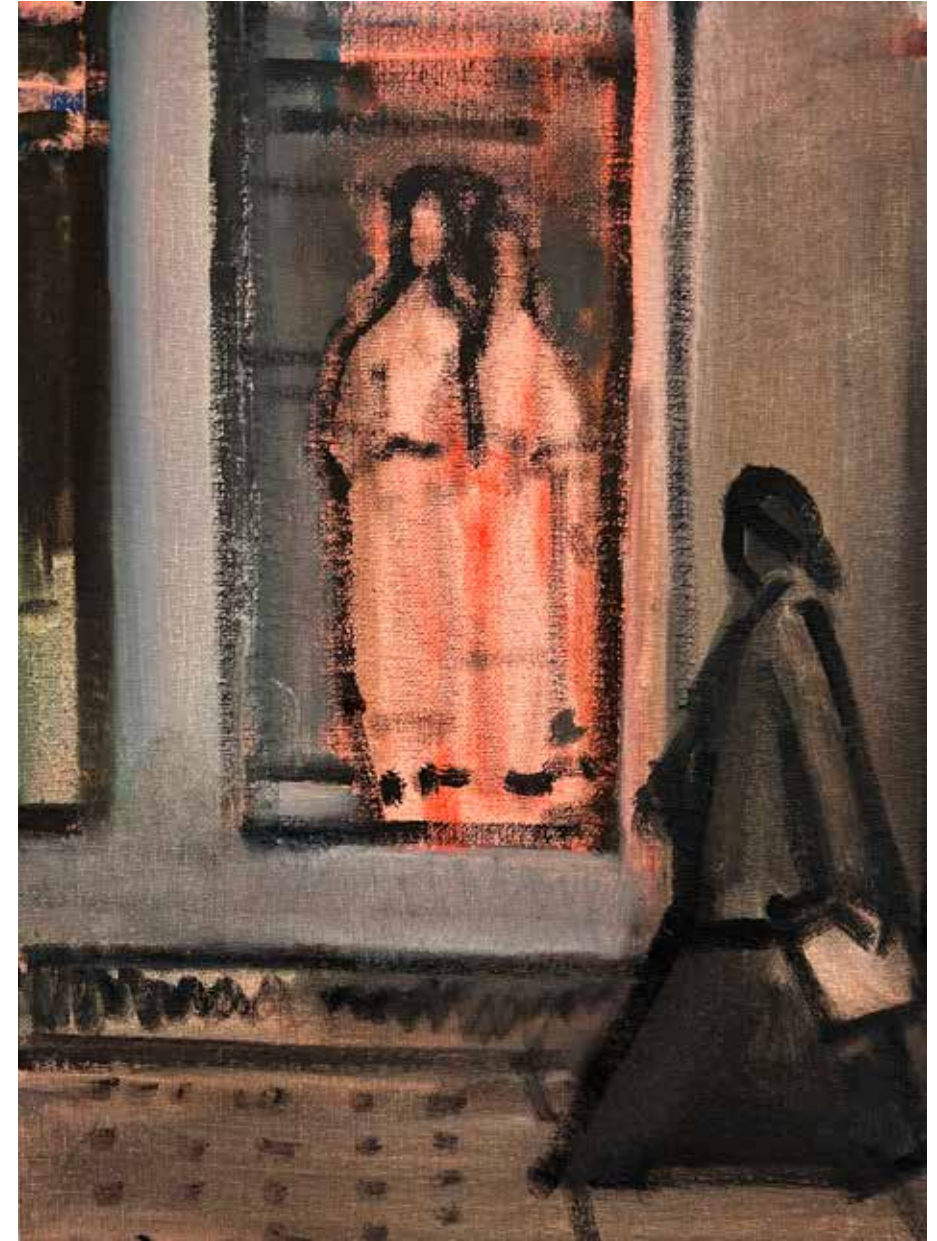
LEFT TO RIGHT:

Hydrangeas 1
2022, monotype, 12 x 12 in.

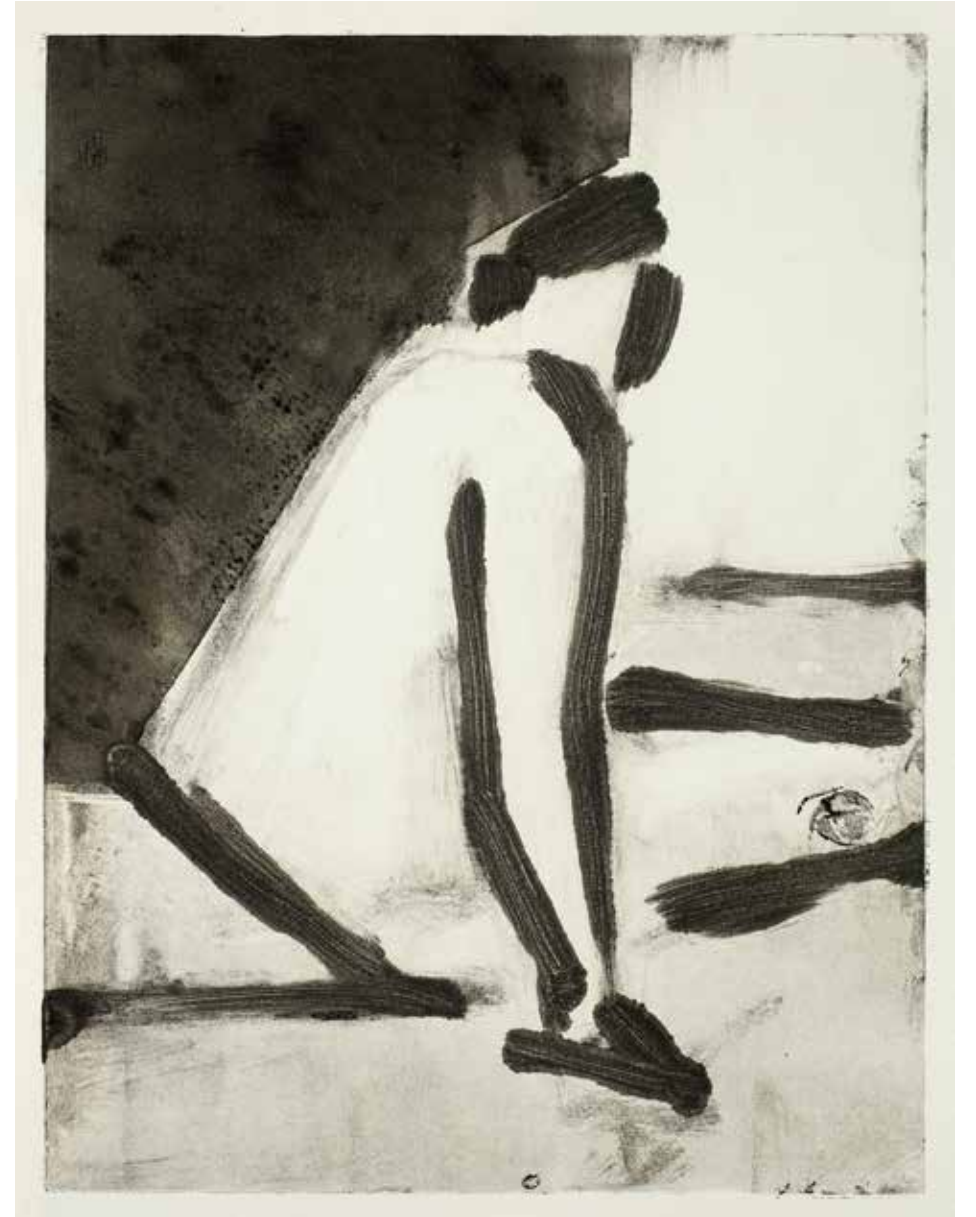
Hydrangeas 2
2022, monotype, 12 x 12 in.

Hydrangeas 3
2022, monotype, 12 x 12 in.

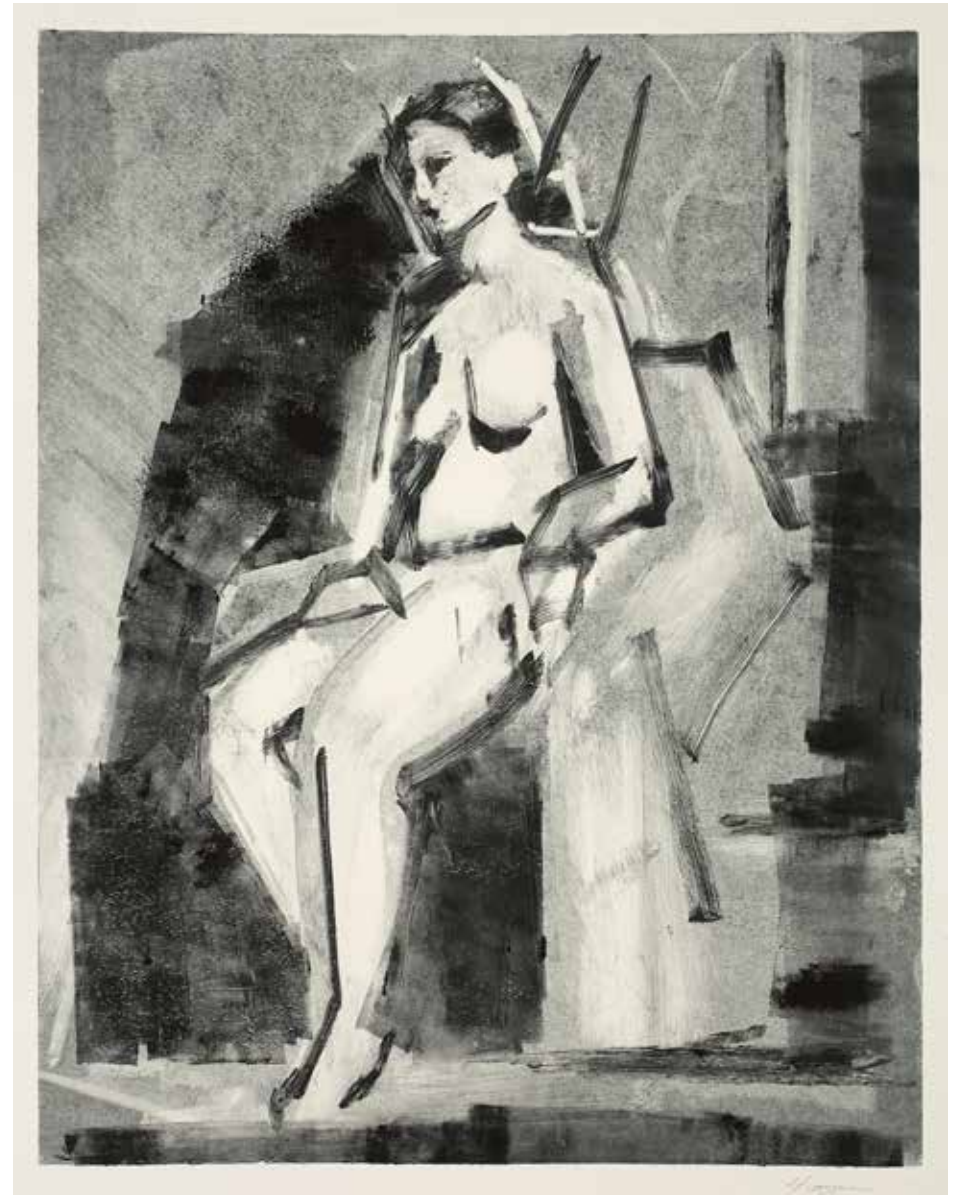
Looking Out, Looking In
2022, oil on canvas, 12 x 9 in.



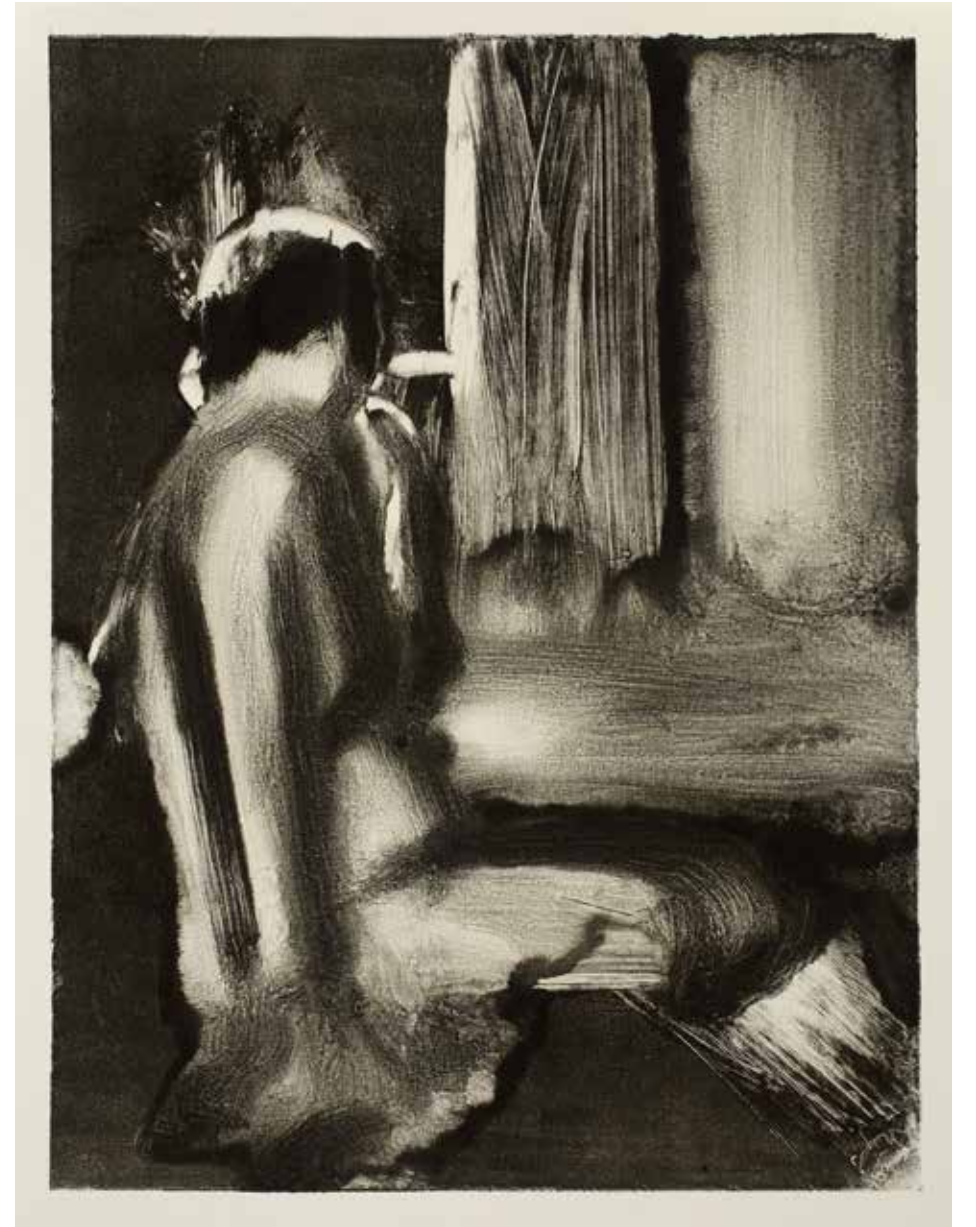
Seated Woman
2022, monotype, 8 x 6 in.



Seated Woman 1
2021, monotype, 18 x 14 in.



Woman
2021, monotype, 8 x 6 in.



Elizabeth Higgins

b. 1960, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Education

MFA Degree earned in Painting, Parson's School of Design, NYC
Studied with Paul Resika, John Heliker, Leland Bell, Albert Kresch, Robert DeNiro, Sr.

The Banff School of Fine Art, Banff, Alberta, Canada

BFA Queens University, Canada

Solo and Two Person Exhibitions

- 2022 *Elizabeth Higgins: How The Light Gets in*, Prince Street Gallery, NYC and George Billis Gallery, Westport, CT
- 2018 *Dreamscapes: Elizabeth Higgins and Cate M. Leach*, Art/Place, Fairfield CT
- 2016 Prince Street Gallery, New York City
Argazzi Art, Lakeville, CT
Two Views: Paintings by Elizabeth Higgins + Jeffrey Starkes, Art/Place, Fairfield, CT
- 1994 Prince Street Gallery, New York City
- 1991 Prince Street Gallery, New York City
- 1990 Nancy Poole's Studio, Toronto, Canada
- 1989 Nancy Poole's Studio, Toronto, Canada
- 1987 Prince Street Gallery, New York City

Selected Exhibitions: Group

- 2022 *Zeuxis: For The Love of Chardin*, First Street Gallery, NYC and Miller Art Museum, WI
- 2022 *Zeuxis: New Connection To Past Work*, There Gallery, NYC
- 2022 *Monothon 2022*, Art Space, Norwalk, CT
- 2022 *Human/Nature*, Alice Gauvin Gallery, Portland.ME
- 2022 *Summer Salon*. Silvermine Guild of Artists, curated by Roger Mudre

- 2022 *Nocturne*, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 2022 *Light of Day: The Language of Landcsape*, Westbeth Gallery, NYC Curated by Karen Wilkin
- 2022 *8th Biennial FOOTPRINT International Exhibition*, Juror Jeff Bergman, Director, Mary Ryan Gallery, NYC
- 2021 *Looking Out, Looking in: an Introspective*, Alice Gauvin Gallery, Portland. ME
- 2020 *About Women*, Lockwood Matthews Museum, Norwalk, CT, curated by Roger Mudre
Silvermine Gallery, Silvermine Art Guild
Gems: Small Still Lifes, There Gallery, NYC
- 2019 *The Studio*, First Street Gallery, NYC and The Alabama Center for the Arts
My Friends, My Family and Me, There Gallery NYC:
Leland Bell, Temma Bell, Richard La Presti, Elizabeth Higgins, Clara Shen, Phyllis Floyd, Louisa Matthias-dottir
Capturing Waveny, The Carriage Barn Art Center, New Canaan, CT
Monothon 2019, Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Norwalk, CT
Silvermine Guild Summer Salon – Curated by Paul Efsthion, Hollis Taggart, NYC
- 2018 *Figures on Paper*, There Gallery, NYC
Capturing Waveny, The Carriage Barn Art Center, New Canaan, CT
Drawing the Curtain, The Painting Center, NYC
Silvermine Gallery, Curated by Susan Eley, New Canaan, CT
Monothon 2018, Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Norwalk, CT
- 2016 *Zeuxis: The Unstilllife*: The Painting Center, NYC, Delaware College of Art and Design, University of Mississippi
Monothon 2016, CCP, Norwalk, CT.
Now and Then, 35th Anniversary Show Art/Place, Fairfield, CT
- 2015 *Monothon, 2015*, CCP, Norwalk, CT
Gallery Artists, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 2014 *Monothon, 2014*, CCP, Norwalk, CT
Avenue Gallery, Norwalk, CT
- 2011 *Large Works*, Prince Street Gallery, New York City

- 2010 *Continuing Views*, Prince Street Gallery, New York City
- 2008 *The New Six*, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
Spectrum 2008 Annual Juried Exhibition, Carriage Barn Arts Center, New Canaan, CT
- 2007 Darien Library at DCA
- 1994 *Spectrum 1994*, New Canaan, CT
- 1994 Mangel Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
- 1993 *Gallery Artists*, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 1991 *20th Anniversary*, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 1990 Nancy Poole's Studio, Toronto, Canada
Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 1989 *Young Masters II*, Ingber Gallery, New York City,
The Landscape, Prince Street Gallery New York City
- 1988 *Young Masters*, Ingber Gallery, New York City
Addison/Ripley Gallery, Washington, D.C.
Gallery Artists, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 1987 *Juried Small Works*, DeBello Gallery, Toronto, Canada
Juried Small Works, AWPY Juried Exhibition, New York City,
Juror: Patterson Sims, Associate Curator, Whitney Museum and Holly Solomon, Holly Solomon Gallery, NYC
Gallery Artists, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 1986 *Still Life Invitational*, College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA
Annual Group Show, Ward-Nasse Gallery, NYC
Gallery Artists, Prince Street Gallery, NYC
- 1984 *East Coast Painters*, University Art Association, two year traveling juried Museum
- 1983 *Painters on View*, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, Ontario, Canada
Toronto Annual Outdoor Exhibition, Toronto, Canada
- 1982 *Image 82*, Ontario Society of Artists Annual Juried Exhibition, Centennial Gallery, Oakville, Canada

Awards

- 1983-85 The Helena Rubenstein Scholarship Award, Parson's School of Design
- 1983 "Ten Young Canadian Artist's Award," The Banff School of Fine Art, Canada

- 1982 Residency Award at the Banff School of Fine Art, Banff, Canada, 1982

Bibliography

- "Elizabeth Higgins," Larry Groff interview for paintingsperceptions.com, November 2022
- "Artisthood and Parenthood," Neil Plotkin interview for Zeuxis with Elizabeth Higgins and Clara Shen, May 30, 2022
- Carl Little, "Human Nature," *Art New England Magazine*, March-April 2022
- Jorge Arango, "Distinctive Styles Display Nature's Emotional Range," *Portland Press Herald*, March 2022
- Karen Wilkin, "Nature and Culture: Twelve Contemporary Landscape Painters," catalog essay for "Light of Day: The Language of Landscape exhibition," Westbeth Gallery, January 2022
- John Goodrich, "Truth be Told" catalog essay for "Elizabeth Higgins" exhibition, Prince Street Gallery, 2019
- "Oil Paintings at Art/Place Gallery," *Fairfield and Westport Minuteman*, November 2018

Selected Collections

- University of Toronto, Canada
- Connor Clark Company, Ltd.
- Arthur Anderson & Company
- First Choice Canadian Communication Corporation
- VIA RAIL CANADA

The artist would like to thank her family for their support – her husband Bill Jones, her daughters Julia, Catherine and Elizabeth Jones, and her extended family, friends and fellow artists.

Additional thanks to Patrick Vingo, Sarah Russo, Lisa Heissen, Alice Gauvin of the Alice Gauvin Gallery, George Billis and Amy Zoller of the George Billis Gallery, and Roger Mudre, Director of the Silvermine Gallery.

Thanks also to Christopher Shore, Liz Bannish and Kim Henrikson of The Center for Contemporary Printmaking.

A very special thanks to Larry Groff for his interview with the artist on paintingperceptions.com, and to John Goodrich for his catalog essay and assistance with installing the exhibition.

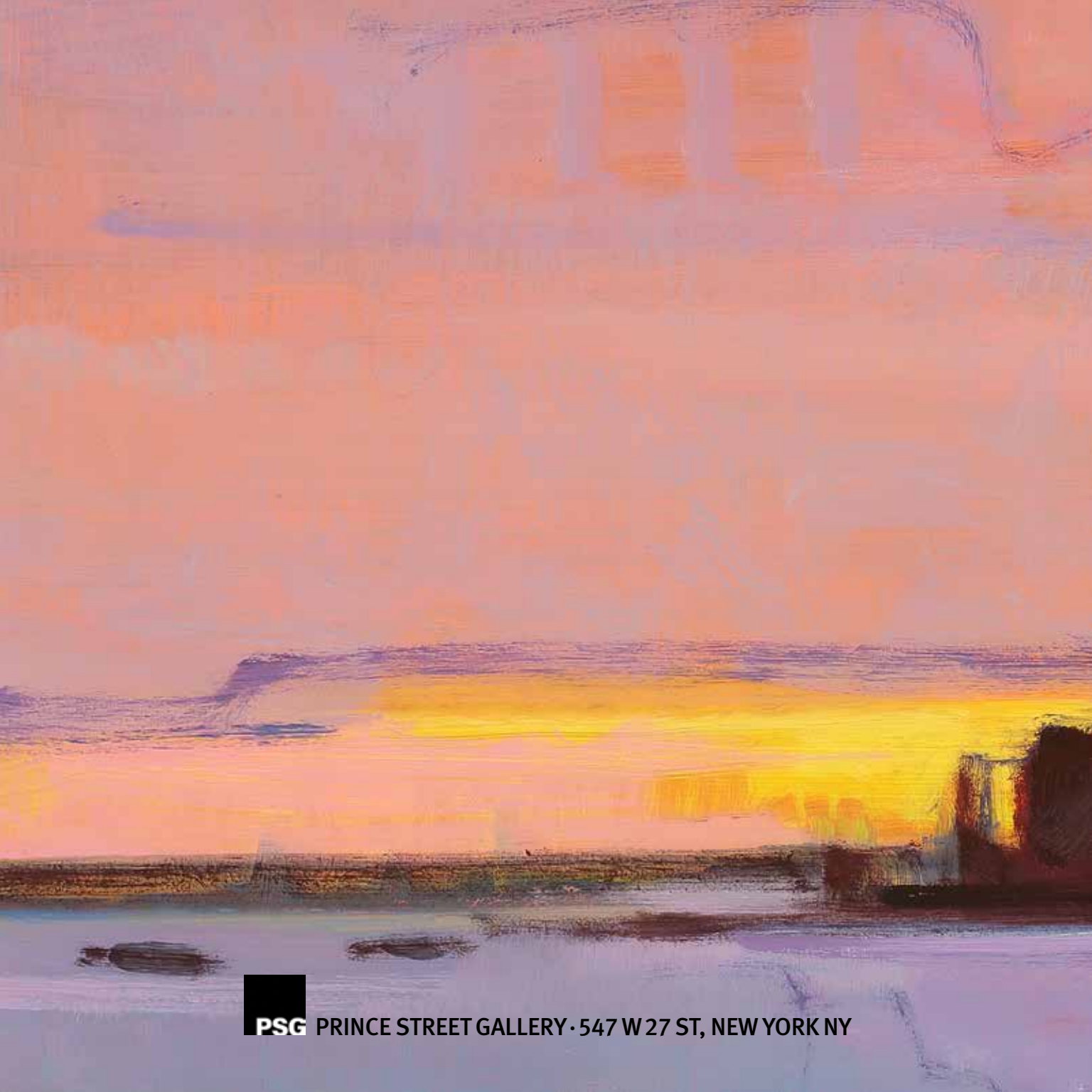
All proceeds to the artist are being donated to www.shatterproof.org in memory of her son, William Jones (1991-2018).

Artwork photography: Patrick Vingo

Catalog design: John Goodrich

BACK COVER:

Evening Light, Long Island Sound (detail)
2022, oil on canvas, 16 x 20 in.



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