

REVIEW BY GRADY HARP



Kenny Harris

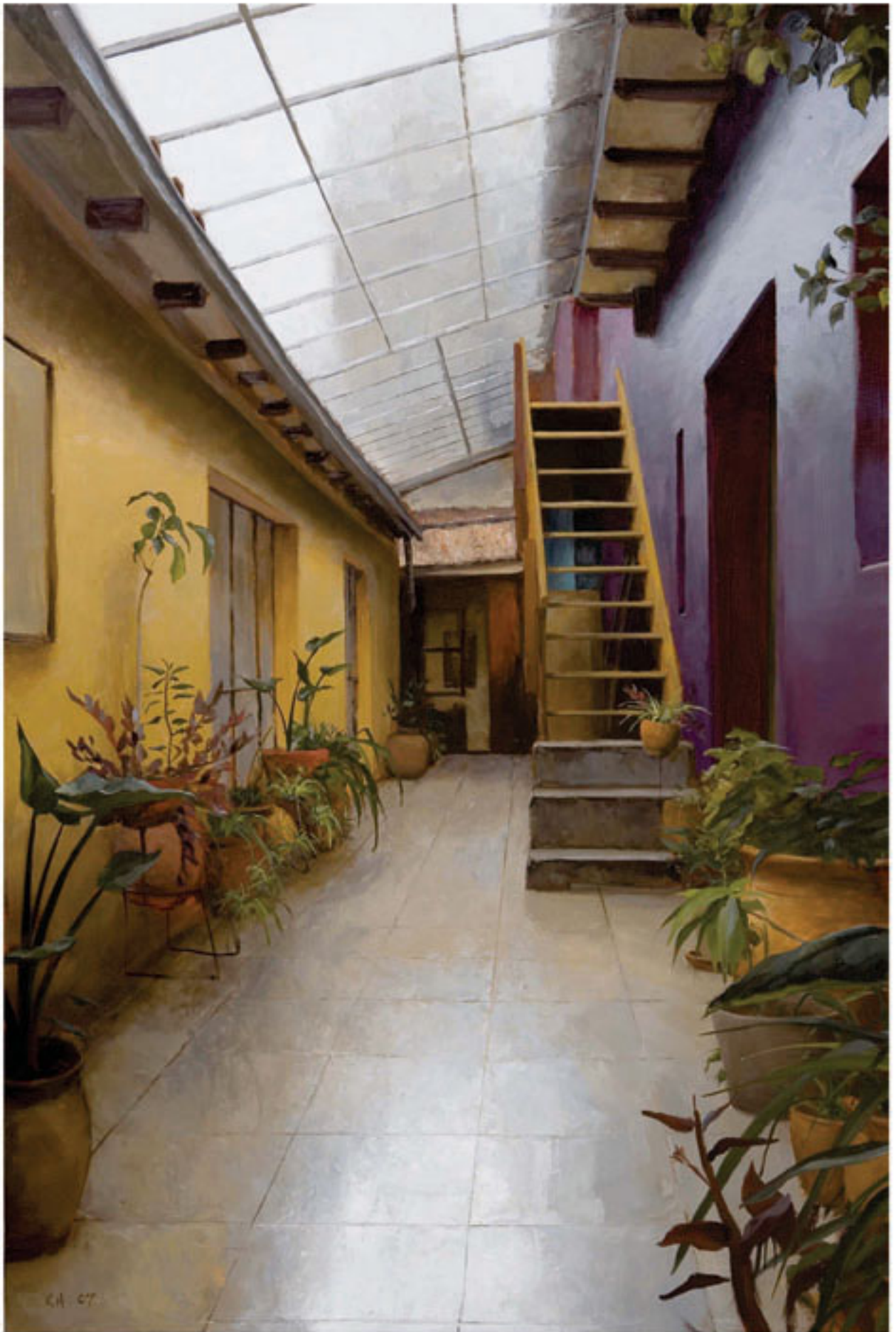
PORTALS AND SPACES AT THE GLOAMING

Art Gray, photographer

"What art offers
is space —
a certain
breathing room
for the spirit."

John Updike

KENNY HARRIS explores. From his childhood exposure to the special light that illuminates the San Francisco Bay region he traveled to the middle of America, training at Colorado College, taking leave of the clear mountain air/high light to study in Florence, Italy where he absorbed the chiaroscuro of the Renaissance painters. The time spent painting in San Francisco and New York increased his curiosity to discover other spaces, other lights and he traveled and painted in Central and South America, Cuba, Europe and Istanbul. Though his home studio is now in Venice, California he maintains the fascination for the differences of light sources from his mental images and the paintings he created during these travels, these explorations of the world and of the qualities of atmosphere that have become the center of his creative output.



Casa de la
Gringa,
Cuzco, Peru
72" X 48"

KA 07



"I would like the colors, their shapes and positions to be arrived at in response to and dictated by the condition of the total space at the time they are considered."

Richard Diebenkorn

Tango Studio,
Buenos Aires,
Argentina

48" X 32"



Yoga Studio, Buenos Aires, Argentina 60" X 90"



El Beso,
Buenos Aires,
Argentina
48" X 56"



Deep Recession, Cuba 32" X 30"



Rebecca's Atelier, Florence, Italy 36" X 24"

"I was never one
to paint space,
I paint air."

Fairfield Porter

with a light that could only be described as Mediterranean. And in different locales, such as Normandy, the shafts of light illuminate and reflect in a conversation as in *Harmony in Blue and Yellow*, or in Istanbul the signpost for much of the artist's discovery of near, distant, reflected and absorbed light is suggested in *Portal* – an entry and an exit, a place now stilled but not distant from the people that will come at the call of the muezzin.

But perhaps Kenny Harris says it best: "For me it is the characteristics of the light which imbue inanimate objects with that sense of being. When it works, and the space comes to life in that calm transitional light, it evokes the elusive emotion of the passing of the light. It is present. I feel it, and I do my best to express it."

Kenny Harris then is a young burgeoning talent who has found quiet and invites us to share.



Normandy 48" X 32"



Portal, Istanbul 48" X 32"



Green Light, Cuba 108" X 72"





Blue Tiles, Cuba 96"X 84"

Harris visited Cuba intending to capture that idiom of island solitude with the idiomatic rhythm of dance and expectation. His own residence provided the relaxed time to absorb the gloaming light and shadows as in *Blue Tiles*, while another space in *Green Light* challenges the eye with light reflected off color beyond a distant portal. In *Deep Recession* he allows us to appreciate the rather public art for sale room beyond whose doors are the rooms, in all their patterned suggestion of the living space in this house cum business place: *Convex Glass*, though in the same house, is more austere, the available light is quietly reflected in a simple mirror and the sheen of the polished tile floor. With only minimal cues Harris shares with us the special atmosphere that is Cuba.

A different place, a different light, and Harris finds the unique prolonged eventide of Florence, Italy in *Rebecca's Atelier*, Florence and in *Camilla's Flat*, Florence. The portals, the irregular spaces, the open windows all play



"A painter is a
choreographer
of space."

Barnett Newman



Camilla's Flat, Florence, Italy 48" X 32"



Harmony in Yellow and Blue,



Convex Glass, Cuba 48" X 30"

Whether in simple empty spaces whose only occupants are crepuscular air and reflected colors from that special time of the day that fascinates Harris, that time of not day and not night known as the gloaming or twilight or dusk, the artist finds inspiration. The light is soft, diffused from the sky when the sun is below the horizon, and in Harris' choices of empty rooms, the light is further strained from entry by open doors or windows, and is captured by reflections from the changing colors of the walls, the ceilings and the textures the room contains.

Perhaps it is this infatuation with the gloaming that makes his paintings so imbued with that quality of light mysteriously connected to darkness, that time also called twilight –a duality or inbetweenness that sets his spaces as stages for stories told or expected or simply imagined. As John Muir said "The grand show is eternal. It is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never dried all at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor is ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal dawn and gloaming, on sea and continents and islands, each in its turn, as the round earth rolls."

Though Kenny Harris paints landscapes and figures and still lifes with a keen observing eye, selecting to study the magic he creates with his selected interiors from his many travels allows a special entry into his talent. He is drawn to the combination of space, light, reflection, surface and environment that come together especially well in spare interiors, doorways or portals devoid of people who may have just left the room, the door, or have forgotten these places exist.

In Cuzco, Peru he found Casa de la Gringa, and created a painting so rich in color, the space free of fauna but rich in flora, and sense of peace filled with exits for the eye but also for admission of light. In Buenos Aires, Argentina Harris recreated spaces meant for tango and for solace, as in El Beso, a tango club gleaming with polished floors and mirrors or Tango Studio, whose shiny floors that echo the squeaks of tango shoes in practice, are captured in the major mirror of this tiny room, while Yoga Studio erases all drama as a place for meditation –simply the stillness and gentle reflected reminders that life outside goes on.