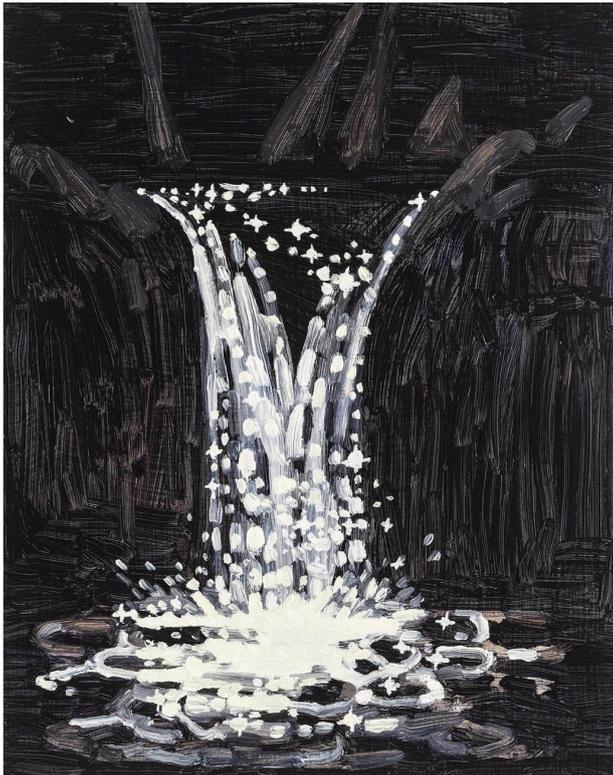


TWO COATS OF PAINT

February 1, 2023

Claudia Keep: Glistening moments of quiet drama

By Martin Bromirski



Claudia Keep, Waterfall II, 2022, oil on masonite panel, 14 x 11 inches

I first saw Claudia Keep's paintings in a recent Jay Gorney Instagram post of her current show "Aubade" at March, in the East Village. The first of the three images Jay posted is of a swimmer, the figure all dashes of refraction under green waves, and the third image a summery painting of a small white garage dappled in sunshine and shadows from a nearby tree. Jay wrote, "small tender paintings." I went to the gallery website to see more and was happy to learn that she lives here in Vermont, and we were able to set up a studio visit.

Claudia's studio is in downtown Burlington in a building very close to the lake, but the studio itself is small and windowless, and sparsely appointed. Claudia mostly sits on the floor when she paints here, with the painting flat before her. Her life is currently studio driven, painting daily. She moved to Vermont last year, partly because she missed nature after three years in New York City, having previously lived and painted in Maine. The sense of isolation now is not much different from her experience in New York, as the move to New York was shortly before Covid happened, and much of her time in the city coincided with quarantines and social distancing.

The studio floor is lined with paintings for me to look at, leaning against the wall. They are all small. They are dark, she's into dark paintings recently, but "it's a darker time of year." All of these paintings are of things that Claudia has witnessed, and taken a photograph of. She works in the studio from her

own photographs; painting from somebody else's photo doesn't work. All of the paintings are titled and, importantly, include the date and time the photo was taken.

The paintings I look at are of cobwebs, moths, branches, icicles, bugs, snow-covered brush, a figure walking down a snowy residential street, the moon and stars, and the water. Most of them have a sense of time suspended that I don't usually feel when looking at painting of something. They are full of things that twinkle, flutter, sparkle, or glitter in the dark, and it's frozen. Claudia says it's sort of obvious, but she loves things that glisten, like a magpie.

They are oil paintings, painted wet on wet, usually finished in one session. Claudia says "I just can't paint over dry paint." They remind me a bit of Richard Bosman paintings – the noir, the palette, the dashed paint application, an oddness. No sharks or screams, but lots of drama. Claudia's mysteries are quieter: "I'm always plagued by what color a room is when the lights are out. Is it grey or purple or brown or blue?"



Claudia Keep, Frost, 2022, oil on masonite panel, 10 x 12 inches