

Three to Watch: Artists Making Their Mark

There is a *lot* of superb art being made these days; this column shines light on a trio of gifted individuals.



KATIE SWATLAND (b. 1981)
AFTERNOON IN PARIS
2009, OIL ON LINEN, 16 x 12 IN.
REHS CONTEMPORARY GALLERIES, NEW YORK CITY

KATIE SWATLAND (b. 1981) is that rare young person who gladly learns from her elders while exploring her own artistic identity. “There were always brushes and paint in the house while I was growing up,” recalls the 28-year-old, who began attending painting retreats with her accomplished artist-mother, Sally Swatland, at a tender age. Her evident talent encouraged no less a master than Richard Schmid to tutor her, and today she and her mother are both *bona fide* members of the Putney Painters, the Vermont group led by Schmid and his wife Nancy Guzik.

Swatland has developed the other side of her brain, too. She graduated *magna cum laude* from Syracuse University with a degree in mechanical engineering, which “taught me how to think analytically and solve problems. Painting, after all, is as much about problem solving, and a technical challenge, as it is an emotional journey.” Having declined two different scholarships for graduate study in engineering, Swatland credits her family with giving her the encouragement she needed to pursue her dream of becoming a professional painter.

Now based in Massachusetts, Swatland paints mostly from life, both *en plein air* and in the studio. Like all dedicated plein-airists, she no longer sees just a tree or a rock: “I see the intricate shapes and patterns of light and shadow. I see in terms of pieces of paint.” Swatland’s dynamic brushwork, remarkably assured for someone so young, successfully captures the essence

of the scene, breaking it down to the bare essentials we need to both “read” it and savor its beauty.

Swatland is represented by Rehs Contemporary Galleries (New York City).