



At the Galleries: Poogy Bjerklie

By Karen Wilkin

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Poogy Bjerklie's debut exhibition at Sears-Peyton Gallery, Chelsea, titled "Inland," reminded us of what happens when observation is internalized and used freely. Bjerklie's mysterious, intimate landscapes appear to be about places she knows well—probably in her native Maine—filtered through memory. At once dreamy and precise, her looming trees and broad fields are completely convincing but seem about to dissolve in mist or to disappear if the moon goes behind a cloud. From across the room, her simplified images, with their subdued colors and soft-edged forms, remind us of nineteenth-century Romantic views of nature. From a closer view, they become entirely contemporary, minimal gatherings of loose strokes and scrapes, energetically disposed on weathered boards. Only with distance do these rough patches of light and dark become powerful suggestions of remembered landscapes. The best of Bjerklie's evocative views recalled Denis Diderot's description of his friend Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin's work, written, astonishingly, in 1765..." one can't make things out from close up, while as one moves away the object coalesces and finally resembles nature; and sometimes it affords as much pleasure from close up as from a distance." This approach may be less radical today than it was in the eighteenth century, but as Bjerklie's strongest works made clear, it can still result in intriguing, poetic pictures.