

— NORTH FORK —  
REAL ESTATE SHOWCASE

## Pure and Simple – Shelter Island Artist Kathryn Lynch

By Samantha McConnel

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Artist Kathryn Lynch does not take it as an insult if you call her work “primitive.” Far from it. Though she prefers to call herself a “simplist” – more specifically a “representational simplist,” she is quick to point out that it is “very hard to be simple.”

Her paintings, she says, look so easy they inspire others to pick up a brush. Then they discover: “‘Damn, that’s hard.’ They don’t understand why it doesn’t work.”

Unlike true primitivists, Lynch underwent formal training, receiving her MFA from the University of Pennsylvania. “I can very quickly get the gist of something, which does take skill.”

Whether working out of her Brooklyn or Shelter Island studios, the artist spends a couple of hours a day walking. It is on these forays that she finds her subjects. She does not necessarily seek out her material, rather she allows things “to stick out and grab me.”

But there are certain subjects that seem to pop up regularly: landscapes and seascapes, of course. But also flowers and cityscapes and such New York icons as tug boats. She completed a series of dog images after her children begged her successfully for a puppy.

Studies in illumination are also rampant. “I often paint night,” she says, remarking on how the light diffuses. “East Coast light especially always has a softness to it where things kind of melt into each other.”

While some have labeled her oeuvre “Expressionist,” she and her friends have coined a term they find more fitting: “Repstract” — a marriage of representational and abstract.

She enjoys the quiet of working on Shelter Island, but mostly she appreciates the art community there where she communes with such other artists as painter Margaret Garrett and photographer Jackie Black. “It’s such a solitary profession that it’s great to put down your brush and be with other people doing what you’re doing.”

A glimpse of her work immediately summons up an impression of Fairfield Porter or Milton Avery. The latter, she says, "is a perfect example of how good simple can be." As for other "dead" influences she cites Alice Neel, Charles Burchfield, Arthur Dove and even Goya. She has also been influenced by such contemporary luminaries as Lois Dodd and Alex Katz. "You know when you look at a picture and feel déjà vu. You feel like you're home, that these are your people, your family."

As appealing as her paintings are, she cringes at the thought they might be considered 'pretty.' "I think they're moody," she says. "A pretty picture of the sun is pretty revolting – saccharine and trite and sentimental. If you're using the sun or water to express darker things or a philosophical view then it is palatable. Sometimes when I paint the sun I think that one day it's going to burn us all up. It's incredibly beautiful but at the same time it's getting closer to us. What you're really doing is commenting on humanity. I don't think you can paint the sun and not have agony in the picture."

Her pieces are in the collections of such celebrities as Jennifer Lopez. They also reside in many corporate and public collections including that of Microsoft; Johnson & Johnson; Pfizer and the Venetian Resort in Macau.