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NEWS RELEASE

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The Abstract in Realism

Nancy Gaucher-Thomas, Mimo Gordon Riley, Gretchen Dow Simpson

September 4, 2010 – January 2, 2011

Newport Art Museum

Reception: September 10

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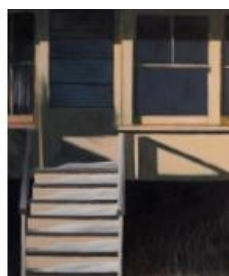
A) MIMO GORDON RILEY, *Dreamkeepers*, 2010, oil on canvas; 48in x 24in

B) GRETCHEN DOW SIMPSON, *Maine XIII*, 2010, oil on linen; 30in x 36in

C) NANCY GAUCHER-THOMAS, *Bianca VI*, 2010, charcoal on Mylar; 22 in x 30 in



A)



B)



C)

NEWPORT, RI: The work of realist painters Nancy Gaucher-Thomas, Gretchen Dow Simpson and Mimo Gordon Riley will be featured together for the first time in “The Abstract in Realism,” an exhibition running at the Newport Art Museum beginning September 4, 2010 and running through January 2, 2011. The Museum hosts a reception for its new exhibitions on Friday, September 10, 5 to 7 pm, 76 Bellevue Avenue, Newport, Rhode Island. The reception is free for Newport Art Museum members, \$10 for non-members.

In group and solo shows throughout the United States, each of these three artists has demonstrated a distinct style and subject matter, but they share a strong sense of composition, an appreciation for mystery, and an approach to their representational paintings and drawings that incorporates many of the characteristics we usually associate with abstract art.

"The Abstract in Realism" includes dramatic portraits drawn in charcoal on Mylar as well as watercolors, Simpson's meditations on architectural details and the landscape; and a progression of Riley's colorful, mosaic-like tree paintings.

Comparing the three styles, Gaucher-Thomas said, "We all tend to work in series. Even though we work in a representational manner, each new painting is approached with formal consideration of the two dimensional surface. They all seem grounded and quiet. (Mine) are black and white, Gretchen's subtle neutral color and Mimo's are more intense in color. They seem to complement each other."

In a recent essay about the exhibition, writer Catherine Boisseau commented, "The emphasis on the abstract results in (works)s that are by turns moody, contemplative, serene, or mysterious... The use of negative space is as important as the subject, and what is omitted is as crucial to the composition as what is portrayed... Characterized by a profound sense of stillness, the graphic quality of these works lends them a sense of monumentality, and an indefinable presence that endows them with a sense of the ephemeral. These qualities invite the viewer to look beyond the obvious realm of representation."

Nancy Gaucher-Thomas

Nancy Gaucher-Thomas, a founder and president emerita of the Art League of Rhode Island and a signature member of the National Watercolor Society, is best known for her subtle watercolors and rich surface patinas painted on plate Bristol paper. "The Abstract in Realism" features new work by Gaucher-Thomas – portraits drawn in charcoal on Mylar, a film-like material that allows the artist to develop fine gradations of shading or to remove marks entirely, leaving behind clean areas of light. "Gaucher-Thomas creates a wide-ranging visual vocabulary based on the tonal values of a single color and focusing on form and essence... In these works, the viewer is a participant rather than an on-looker, and the quiet drama of these portraits proves the old adage that the imposition of discipline and restriction can lead to unanticipated flashes of creativity and discovery." writes Boisseau. Gaucher-Thomas studied advertising design and photography at the New York Phoenix School of Design in New York City and established a design studio in northern New Jersey before moving to Rhode Island.

Mimo Gordon Riley

Trees served as backdrops in Mimo Gordon Riley's landscape paintings until three years ago when she began exploring them as subject matter through the use of simple, abstract shapes and high color. "The Abstract in Realism" includes multiple examples from the "tree" series, allowing the viewer to observe Riley's artistic progression. Boisseau writes, "(Riley's) paintings turn the conventional relationship of object and background on its head, and play with perceptions of pattern and detail. Riley is concerned with shape, modulation of color, and interpretation of form, some of which she flattens and reduces to one or two colors on a contrasting background." Riley studied printmaking at the School of the Museum of Fine Art, Boston, and later worked in advertising in Hartford, Boston, and New York. She ran a photography business for many years, but left to study painting at Portland School of Art (now Maine College of Art.) Riley lives in Providence, Rhode Island and shares a studio building with Gretchen Dow Simpson in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

Gretchen Dow Simpson

Gretchen Dow Simpson is well-known nationally for her crisp, geometric explorations of architectural details, more than fifty eight of which appeared on the cover of *New Yorker* magazine between 1974 and 1993. Boisseau writes, "Imbued with quietude, wistfulness, and elegance, Simpson's paintings reveal little but say much... Simpson is attracted to the proportional relationship of things, zooming in on seemingly arbitrary details, exaggerating and interpreting patterns, and focusing on 'the edge of things.'" Her recent work is more painterly and voluminous yet retains the unmistakable Simpson elements of the hidden staircase, or the glimpse through a window in the late afternoon sun. Boisseau writes, "These paintings play with our emotional responses, alternating between a sense of peace and a foreboding sense of

mystery.” After attending The Rhode Island School of Design, Simpson began her career as a photographer in Boston and New York. She is a Pell Award recipient and holds an honorary Doctorate from Bryant University.

About the Newport Art Museum: The Newport Art Museum's collections and exhibitions focus on the visual artists of Newport and southeastern New England, reflecting both the rich heritage of the past and the lively art scene of the present. The Museum also offers art classes and camps, concerts, talks, trips, and special events throughout the year. The Newport Art Museum is fully accredited by the American Association of Museums and receives support from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts. The Newport Art Museum is situated in Newport's Old Quarter at 76 Bellevue Avenue, Newport, Rhode Island. Admission: \$10 adults; \$8 seniors; \$6 Military and students with valid ID; Museum members and children under 5: no charge. By donation Saturday from 10 am to noon. Hours beginning May 1: Tuesday - Saturday 10 am - 5 pm, Sun 12 - 5 pm. The Museum closes at 4 pm November 1 - April 30. Open most major holiday Mondays. Check website for details. To learn more visit www.NewportArtMuseum.org or call (401) 848-8200.

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