

Heidrun Rathgeb

My Yellow Room

March 23 - April 29, 2023

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 23, 6 - 8 PM.

The title of this exhibition (*My Yellow Room*) refers to one of Heidrun Rathgeb's diminutive but captivating paintings in tempera on panel, around three dozen of which are included in show, along with a handful of similar works in watercolor on paper. The painting in turn owes its existence to a small guest room where she once stayed during an extended hike in the Alps, the luminousness of which inspired it and several other pieces as well.

Although they vary in their exact dimensions, most of her works are not much larger than a post card, requiring the viewer to get very close in order to fully experience the subtlety of their texture and brushwork. Her paintings present a seemingly encyclopedic record of casual moments in Rathgeb's daily life: views of rooms in her home, her children at work and at play, and the land and water around her home in southern Germany. Throughout all of these images, there is a simple but powerful matter-of-factness that makes each scene a testament to the profound beauty of life lived simply in tranquil surroundings.

Since all landscape paintings are kin to one another by virtue of their shared concern with capturing nature in all its fleeting richness, it's not hard to make associations between some of Rathgeb's outdoor scenes and a wide range of works from the art-historical canon: her panels can evoke a wide range of possible comparisons, from the straightforward and serene rural idylls of Francois Millet, Camille Pissarro, and the Barbizon painters, to the moodier and more emotionally charged nightscapes of Marianne von Werefkin or Albert Pinkham Ryder. What makes Rathgeb's works unique and distinctive is her painting technique, which combines the venerable Renaissance medium of egg tempera on panel with loose, layered, subtly energetic brushwork that echoes some of the great Modernist innovators, particularly the French Impressionists and German Expressionists. But her process is more deliberate and meditative than these qualities might suggest, as she works from initial black and white sketches and grounds her color choices in memory and reminiscence, thus capturing both the objective and subjective aura of each specific lived moment that she deems worthy of depiction. "My sketchbooks form an ongoing collection of experiences – my daily epiphanies," she once wrote. "A drawing can hold the memory of a place, the light the scent and, however briefly scribbled, it forms a rich source for a painting." The result is paintings that are at once both calm and vibrant with a subtle living energy.

Although nature looms large in Rathgeb's works, there's also a strong human presence—at times literal, at times implied—that solidly grounds every scene in everyday experience. Yet there's also a hint of the miraculous in some that animates the entire collection with something like a

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hint of mysticism. This is especially true in her nocturnal images, in which the moon seems to look out like a silent watcher over the world, or a ring of reflections in the surface of a dark lake looks like a luminous fairy ring in an otherworldly meadow. Her paintings are intimate, placid, and idyllic, but often faintly eerie and filled with portent as well, as if suggesting an incipient revelation lurking behind the veil of earth and sky,

Heidrun Rathgeb was born in 1967 in southern Germany. She studied painting in London at the Slade School of Fine Art (1996-99) and the Byam Shaw School of Art (1993-96). Since 2001 she has lived with her family in a remote farmhouse close to Lake Constance and the Alps.

For further information or to schedule an interview with the artist, please contact 532 Gallery Thomas Jaeckel by e-mail at info@532gallery.com