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Glyndor Gallery



Arbores Venerabiles

March 3 – July 19, 2009

Joan Backes

*TREE, Wave Hill, NY
(a), 2008, detail*

With almost clinical precision, Joan Backes documents the bark of the crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia*) in painting [a], lacebark pine (*Pinus bungeana*) in painting [b], and sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) in painting [c]. Her close-up perspective of the bark removes it from any depth of setting, in some places abstracting it into intricate patterns and designs. At the same time, she remains faithful to the identity of the trees, embracing them as unique specimens worthy of documentation. Backes paints in acrylic on archival panel, acknowledging the fact that her paintings may outlive the trees that she depicts. She therefore takes care not only to document the delicate patterns unique to each tree, but also to memorialize them. In preparation for these paintings, Backes visited Wave Hill numerous times to observe and photograph the trees in different light and weather conditions. She then selected one photograph of each tree to work from, carefully choosing compositions that provided unique combinations of light, color, and texture.

This series of bark paintings continues Backes's work with trees, a subject she has been pursuing since 2000. She explores the materiality of trees in both two and three dimensions, working in installation, video, sound, and sculpture, in addition to drawing and painting. She has forthcoming solo exhibitions at Uppsala Kunstmuseum and Linnaeus Gardens, both in Uppsala, Sweden. She has exhibited in a range of international venues that include LA Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA; Gallery of the Faculty of Painting, Sculpture, and Graphic Arts, Bangkok, Thailand; Thomas McCormick Gallery, Chicago, IL; Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada; SAFN Museum, Reykjavik, Iceland; and Rauma Art Museum, Rauma, Finland; among others. Backes's recent awards include the Senior Fulbright Scholar Award and the Brown University Creative Arts Council Faculty Award. She earned her BA from the University of Iowa and her MFA from Northwestern University.

More information can be found at: <http://www.deanjensengallery.com/backes.htm>



TREE, Wave Hill, NY (a), 2008

Acrylic on panel
24" x 12"
Courtesy of the artist and LA Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA




TREE, Wave Hill, NY (b), 2009
Acrylic on panel
24" x 18"
Courtesy of the artist and LA Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA



TREE, Wave Hill, NY (c), 2009
Acrylic on panel
24" x 18"
Courtesy of the artist and LA Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA

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