

# KATHI SMITH'S NEW ENGLAND

Patricia Ladd Carega Gallery  
69 Maple Street  
Center Sandwich, New Hampshire

July 30 through August 16

It is a world of contrasts. Mysterious yet familiar. Natural yet narrative. Realistic yet abstract. Kathi Smith's paintings invite you to take your time, peer into what lies beyond the surface, look between, behind and through. Lose yourself, like she does, in the act of looking.

Backyards and side yards — whose? A road through a deeply shaded tangle of forest leads to sunny mountains beyond — why is an orange snowplow half-hidden in a not-yet-melted pile of snow? A view from a window, from behind a tree, near a back porch, through a tangle of branches — Smith invites us to join her in close observation of familiar-seeming places. Landscapes, but with windows, corners of houses, sheds, unidentifiable structures that mark these as known places, lived-in places, places with stories.

Smith's surfaces are worked and reworked, brushed, rubbed, dabbed, scuffed and pressed, built up in layers, scraped down again, scratched through, into a surface defined by texture and traveling marks, touched with brilliant color. "I'm always flirting with abstraction," Smith said. "There's a balance between the literal and the conceptual. For me, painting is about seeing, experiencing and articulating the world (things, spaces, places) around me. Painting



*Little Boxes on the Hillside*, 2011, oil on canvas, 16" x 20" (courtesy of Aucocisco Galleries, Portland, ME).

is about using observation, perspective, point of view and perception to translate the world I find myself in."

Andres Verzosa paired her paintings with landscape artist Robert Dyer for the ninth "Double Dozen" exhibition this spring at the prestigious Aucocisco Gallery in Portland. "She has a language and vision. She's a mature artist in that way and also still evolving," said Verzosa. "I can see where she's delighted to find her way in a canvas."

Smith's newest work will be featured in a solo exhibition running from July 30 through August 16 at Patricia Ladd Carega Gallery in Center Sandwich, N.H. "I think she's a very intriguing artist," said gallery owner Patricia Carega. "I love the intimacy of her New England scenes. It's a different approach to landscape, and very refreshing."

Originally from Wilton, Maine, Smith is inspired by places she knows. Some paintings are begun on site and finished in the studio, and some are derived from her memories. Smith evokes a sense of each place, what it feels like and how Vermont, say, feels different from New Hampshire. "I'm interested in the role of place in any one person's development. In particular, how the visual memory of a place can be conjured through sensation, such as color, light and touch," Smith said.

Smith began her career as an abstract painter and cites abstract expressionists like Willem de Kooning



*Snow Globe*, 2011, oil on canvas, 36" x 30" (Courtesy of Aucocisco Galleries, Portland, ME).

and California abstractionist painters Richard Diebenkorn, James Weeks and Elmer Bischoff as influences. She is also quick to credit her teachers and mentors, including Craig Hood and Richard Brown Lethem, among many others. After receiving her BFA in painting and drawing from the University of Southern Maine, Smith spent a few years in Oregon, and then returned to New England for her MFA in painting. She chose the University of New Hampshire in order to build on the figurative, narrative aspects of her work.

Smith's reputation and career are rapidly expanding. In the past year and a half, she has participated in numerous regional and national one- or two-person or juried exhibitions, and three significant residencies at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Weir Farm Art Center and Heliker-LaHotan Foundation, all while maintaining her studio practice in Ashland, N.H., and teaching at Plymouth State University and the AVA Gallery and Art Center in Lebanon. Smith welcomes these opportunities to work. "Work and a work ethic are essential to the visual artist," she said. "I come from a lineage of hardworking New Englanders. I work every day on my practice. To be a painter, one must paint!"