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## ANN CRAVEN: SUNSET MOON

By David Rhodes



Ann Craven, Lavender Moon (Bluish Light), 2018, 2018.  
Oil on canvas, 90 × 72 inches. Courtesy Karma.

What can a painting be in the Internet age—to what ends might an artist go to incorporate, or respond to a technology that potentially overawes each day with its prosaic, and yet sublime, reach. Cute animals and birds—their images proliferated effortlessly across gigabytes—are just one aspect. Images apparently leached of individuality by overuse and repetition are thrust from personal value to shared cliché. But that’s not the only consequence possible for found imagery, let’s call it, or repeated exposure to any given image—a “Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose,” as Gertrude Stein once said. It is particular, not necessarily singular: Ann Craven’s repeated motifs of flowers, moons, sunsets, or birds typically extend an accessible image into multiplicity without undermining the exceptional character contained in each image produced. This is done through a hands-on process: each painting acting as a recovery of a specific moment or activity, now a memory, is itself another reflection and a retrieval of lost time. This Romantic Modernist approach evinces the freshness of non-vocational painting despite there being nothing amateurish about any of the works here.

In two gallery spaces, paintings on several scales repeat and occasionally combine motifs: moons, sunsets, and a canary, and though the repeated motifs are easily recognizable as such, the differences in the way that they have been painted and the shifts in color make each one a pleasure to absorb visually while contemplating

the lapse of time between them—for the artist, time between paintings and, for the viewer, in moving through the gallery. It is clear that Craven has found the appropriate vehicle for her physical and intellectual pursuit of painting. Take for example the Lavender Moon paintings. In the front gallery, Lavender Moon (Bluish Light) 2018, (2018) is 90 × 72 inches, an imposing size, loosely painted, dark silhouetted branches and leaves pattern unevenly a blue violet sky and cross a white full moon and its bright gradated halo. The moon is placed above the middle and center of the painting, encouraging the viewer to look up in a concentrated way, much like the artist on seeing the actual moon in a night sky. A smaller painting in the back room, Lavender Moon (Guilford, Through Trees, 3-31-18, 10PM), 2018 (2018) describes the moon through trees on another night, and at 20 × 16 inches, on a more intimate scale. The act of recording a moment stresses temporality, and this is reiterated in the precise title that details data of location and time. The moon paintings are painted outdoors, from life, and have a direct swiftness that is a contrast to the canary paintings.

Fuchsia, coral pink, golden yellow, and sky blue contrast vibrantly together with green and red in Pink Canary (Stepping Out, on Pink Sunset), 2018, a large painting, 90 × 72 inches, from 2018. The canary perches amongst stems, berries, and flowers. Turned to our right, its eye is like a still punctuation dot amongst all the hot modulated color. It's a complex painting of deft brush marks and blurs of scraped paint that mixes color and delineates shape so sensually it is hard not to imagine the artist's joy in painting this image, communicated so effectively to the viewer. Unreserved pleasure in un-mechanical reproduction is heightened after the convenience of its opposing source—a mass-produced postcard of a canary. In Albert Camus's essay on Sisyphus he concludes, "one must imagine Sisyphus happy," and we might conclude that Craven is a happy woman, involved as she is, again and again, in the production of such successfully engaging paintings.