

PROVINCETOWN ARTS

LIGHT IS A PLACE

The Art of Diana Horowitz

BY DAVID WHELAN | 2025/26

A VIRTUOSIC PAINTER OF subtle tones and color, Diana Horowitz is drawn to landscapes that inspire deep looking. By carefully observing a specific place in time, Horowitz translates her perception into intimate and impactful paintings. The artist paints a wide range of subjects: the Manhattan skyline viewed from the one-hundredth floor, fortified cities in the Italian countryside, and the coastlines of Outer Cape Cod. While past exhibitions have focused on discrete parts of the artist's oeuvre, Horowitz's recent exhibition, *Light Is a Place* at Bookstein Projects in New York City, brings all of these



Diana Horowitz working at 7 World Trade Center on the 65th Floor.
Courtesy Silverstein Properties: Photo by Tommy Agriodmas.

subjects together. In doing so, our focus is shifted away from descriptors such as big and small, urban or rural, toward what truly matters to the artist: light itself as a place, not only within the world we inhabit but within the painting itself.

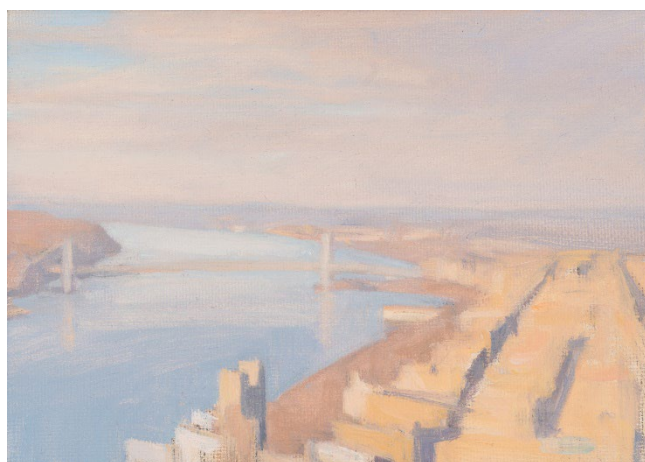
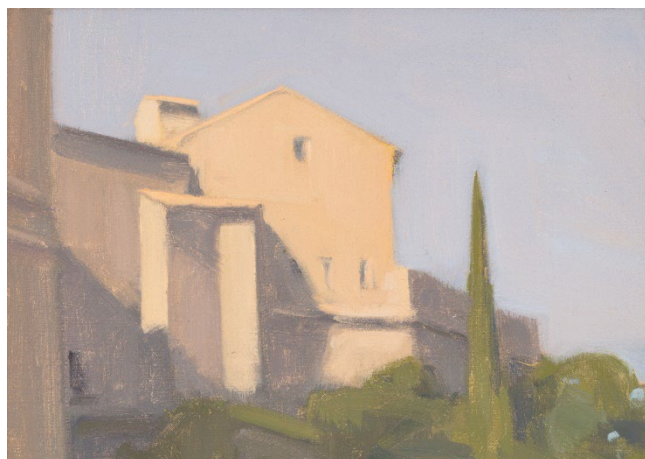
Represented in Provincetown by the Schoolhouse Gallery, Horowitz was honored by the Provincetown Art Association and Museum (PAAM) with the organization's Award for Artistic Excellence in 2023. A native New Yorker, she grew up in Washington Heights, a neighborhood in northern Manhattan with elevated views of the city. This spatial dynamic is repeated throughout her landscapes, which are often painted from a slightly raised position. Perhaps the clearest example of this is *From the 100th Floor* (2023). Here, a portion of the city's grid recedes along a river, blurred by a warm haze that disappears the waterfront. A bridge spans the river, painted with a light touch. Squint your eyes and the bridge evaporates; the blue of the river and orange superstructure blur into one. Looking at the painting, even though my gaze was fixed directly on it, it felt as though it was in my periphery. The image isn't quite in focus, as if the eye has just moved away from it, and yet it is this very quality that draws my vision deeper into the picture. Although the painting was made relatively quickly, in two or three hours, it feels slow and considered. Painted in one continuous mass, buildings and city blocks are suggested with slabs of warm peach and pink, saturated in light. It is essentially an abstract

painting, but there is still a tremendous amount of information given to the viewer. As is the case in most of Horowitz's recent work, there are very few shadows in this picture. Painted in a mid-tone, the shadows suggest only the slightest difference between light and dark. Filled with reflective light, they offer a levity to the work.

New York City is where Horowitz created many of her larger cityscapes, mostly around am- the early 2000s. While making these more time-consuming works, she also painted smaller, more spontaneous paintings, allowing one size to inform the other. Recently, the artist has committed herself to painting on a more intimate scale, giving herself permission to pare down her choices and focus on the essence of a place. For many, New York City can feel overwhelming and impenetrable. But gazing over the city into the distance, Horowitz transforms it into a malleable material. The city takes on the porous qualities of a in cloud, relying on atmosphere rather than linear perspective to make space.

Another seismic shift in Horowitz's practice came while attending the Tyler School graduate program in Rome in 1983-84. While living in the ancient city, she studied the works of Caravaggio, Piero della Francesca, and Titian, among many others. Observing the natural light of the city, she started making ambitious paintings that captured the light playing off both landscape and architecture. Horowitz has since returned to Italy regularly to paint and teach, and its influence plays heavily into her work.

In the recent *Sant'Oreste, for Morandi* (2024), we see a portion of the town's limestone exterior moving into the middle distance. An arrangement of walls, windows, and rooftops catches the warm light in pieces, creating a dynamic rhythm, casting subtle shadows of pale bluish mauve with warm undertones. On the painting's broadest and brightest plane we see the suggestion of three small windows, painted with great care and variation. The eye is guided from one corner to the next, splitting the composition diagonally in half. Below the architecture, patches of loose brushstrokes suggest a group of trees, one pointing fiercely upwards



(top to bottom) *Beach Point, Bay*, 2024, oil on linen, 5 x 7 inches; *San'Oreste, for Morandi*, 2024, oil on linen, 5 x 7 inches; *From the 100th Floor*, 2024, oil on canvas board, 5 x 7 inches.

into the haze. Between this arborous spike and a nearby house saturated with light, a negative shape is created. The sky pushes forward as an abstraction, creating a subtle but thrilling spatial contradiction—what artist Hans Hofmann called a push-pull relationship, where planes of color expand and contract to create dynamic relationships. Horowitz's colors are also very complex here, but especially in the sky, where she plays thin layers of gray-pink clouds against light blue, reminding us that skies are rarely just blue but rather a mix of subtle warms and cools. Giorgio Morandi is a clear influence in this work. The edges of shapes are soft and varied, inviting our eye to move easily between forms. Like Morandi, there is a sense of things beginning to move ever so slightly, capturing the moment just before or after stillness.

The remoteness of Provincetown, where Horowitz spent much of her childhood, provides many opportunities to appreciate stillness as well, especially in the off season. The artist made some of her first drawings as a teenager in the marshes of Truro, and her mother, Brenda Horowitz-also a painter-attended Hans Hofmann's classes in town. The connections to this place run deep. When a place has been so thoroughly depicted as Provincetown, it can be hard to find your own path, but Horowitz has formed a visual language that's entirely her own. From Beach Point in North Truro, one can see the hook of Provincetown turn in the distance; Horowitz has painted a number of paintings of Cape Cod Bay from this spot, with rows of waves slowly coming into shore on a gray day. In *Beach Point, Bay* (2024), each cresting wave has a slightly different shape, their colors a beautiful pairing of gray, pink, and green. The waves act as visual steps for our vision to slowly enter the picture. Having grown up by the ocean, I am intimately familiar with the experience of walking up to the border between land and water. Horowitz captures this feeling of approaching the edge, then casts our vision into the distance, to the places we cannot reach. In this painting, what lies beyond the waves is unclear. The waves slowly cool as they recede into the distance until the water finally relaxes and dissolves into the sky. This ambivalence invites our introspection. On one hand, the repetition of the waves is comforting and rhythmic, one horizontal line following after another with subtle variation. But there is also something unrelenting about their pattern, and a feeling that something has gone missing. Are we looking out, waiting for something to appear? In lieu of resolution we soak up the overcast light, gray, pink, and green, skimming the bay one row at a time.

On the Outer Cape, one feels the glacial history of the polar ice melt retreating north, dragging its great weight and density across the Earth, shaping the land and estuaries. In all of her landscapes, whether a window overlooking the city or at the precipice of an ancient Italian village, Horowitz leads us to a border only to discover that it's not what we may have thought. Looking at her recent work, with its soft edges and atmosphere applied to both built structure and natural land, I can't help but think of things slipping away, appearances just holding on, images loosening their grip on certainty and dissolving into a pleasurable ambiguity. Horowitz's paintings remind us that, like the shoreline, edges are always shifting and forever permeable, on the move.

DAVID WHELAN is a painter living in Brooklyn, New York. He holds degrees from Lyme Academy of Fine Arts and Yale University's School of Art. His writing has appeared in Artforum, the Brooklyn Rail, and Two Coats of Paint.