

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Living with Anne Rothenstein
David and Janet Peoples
2003

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It begins in the gallery. This is where we first meet the work and observe it with a studied, perhaps even confrontational gaze.

What follows is another thing altogether. The home, the hearth, the bedroom, the staircase, the hall.... if that first look saw it all, so be it. If the work had only that to offer, that is not necessarily too little, it may be just enough. But there is more, years more.

This is work that sustains its mystery, that continues - day in and day out, year in and year out - to delight, to surprise, to puzzle, even to confuse the casual glance, the unexpected look; it is work that can suddenly illuminate the tired mind.

These qualities reside in so many of Anne Rothenstein's paintings. The couple sitting in the cafe, a wine glass and a tea cup on the table in front of them, have had innumerable conversations over the years, bored one day, burdened other days with some insoluble dilemma, their relationship itself changing with their discourse or silence.

And the reclining ladies? Moody, smug sometimes, wise at other times, or overcome with a delicious ennui. And the man in the red sock, we always catch him just as he's putting on the sock very much in the moment. And why have we noticed him just at that moment? Does the artist herself know. Perhaps it is in keeping this from herself as much as us that she invests her gentle, subdued paintings with their elusive, enduring tension. But maybe not. That too is part of the mystery and better left so.