

Joy to the World

Feasley's exuberant art shines

by Roberta Fallon

There are narrators, decorators, abstracters, experimenters and those who use all those strategies at once—like Joy Feasley. “Weaving Spiders Come Not Here” is Feasley’s first solo show at Locks Gallery, though she showed there with Clare Rojas in 2007. Feasley mostly makes narrative sweet-tart paintings, but some are pure pattern. Experimental pieces play with resin, flocking and glitter.

The works focus on the beauty of the real world and the imagined beauty of the unseen spiritual realm. It’s a traditional art subject but there’s nothing traditional about this contemporary artist’s take, which is secular and personal but not religious or proselytizing.

Feasley’s show is an improbable marriage of a bohemian aesthetic with a blue-chip venue—but it works beautifully. Easel-sized landscapes, with their wild saturated colors and quirky scenes, look great in the big white-walled space. The pure design pieces smolder.

The subject matter is accessible, and because Feasley made the show into an installation by adding sculptural touches (including a black-beaded curtain across the gallery’s entryway), she claims her space completely. The show becomes Feasley’s personal wonderland within the larger gallery.

The beaded curtain or veil places the show in the context of youthful hippie-esque decor, which is an alternative-culture reference that fits. Other sculptural touches like the artist’s trademark Moravian stars on the floor and hanging up also separate the show from more traditional gallery hangings. The sleek, shiny stars, about the size of a small child with its arms out, create a tableau right out of Feasley’s Moravian star-filled paintings on the walls. The sculpture’s presence in the room is a little spooky because it places you inside Feasley’s spiritual realm, making you a traveler on her journey.

“Weaving Spiders Come Not Here” is a phrase from Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*. It’s part of the protective charm said to keep the sleeping Titania safe from harm. In a way, we are all Titania sleeping and dreaming, and Feasley’s paintings are bright-hued charms to repel the harm.



Wheels in the sky: Feasley's color discs hover above people on a journey.

Themes of guardianship and watchfulness are all over the show. The star sculptures are like sentinels. In paintings like *Climbing Mount Fuji With Tomo*, *Solstice* and others, Moravian stars hover quietly like guardians or form a protective (and decorative) net in the sky.

Overall the works achieve a quietude that belies the fast-paced world we live in. Works like “*Navigating Ernst*,” “*Midnight Sun*” and “*Hiking With You*” show people standing or sitting, quietly poised and looking out over vast eternal mountaintop landscapes.

The echo of the Hudson River school’s sublime landscapes is here. Yet unlike the Hudson River painters who celebrated the land and its possibilities, Feasley isn’t celebrating. These are meditative works washed with acid-colored skies, reminding us our splendors are endangered.

There are two symbolic color wheels in two landscapes that are a complete surprise and wonderfully mysterious. I want to say that these are like the Moravian stars—their points here all toward the center instead of facing outward. Their placement in the paintings makes them, like the stars, protectors.

I’ve always admired Feasley’s ability to create her own cosmos and fill it with strange wonders. The spiritual quest played out in this work is a bright one that we can all follow.

“*Weaving Spiders Come Not Here*” Through July 11.

Free.

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