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Two outstanding pairings, at Pentimenti and at Locks

By Edith Newhall
For the Inquirer

Two of the best gallery exhibitions currently on view in Philadelphia are under the same roof, and they're both group shows. You have to wonder if Locks Gallery planned to have the encyclopedic "Drawing" and "Water Is Best" at the same time, but both are so well done, it hardly matters.

The drawings in "Drawing" are a gathering of uniformly strong, mostly personal statements by each of its 20 artists. Elizabeth



From Locks' "Water Is Best" exhibit, Ena Swansea's charming "Windy Day" (2009).

Osborne's simply composed *Untitled (Portrait of a Young Woman)* (1973), is one of the most magnetic works here. In it, a woman sitting near a window at night is illuminated by an electric light on one side of her face and shadowed by the night's darkness on the other. Alice Neel's *Bette Fisher* (1965) is a similarly intense portrait of a woman, but in Neel's Van Gogh-ish, tightly wound line.

You sense that Osborne identifies with her subject and that Neel, as she was wont to do, is skewering hers.

Some other standouts include an enormous, vertical painting on paper by Suzanne McLelland; intimate works on paper dedicated to friends by Willem de Kooning and Arshile Gorky; and a Warren Rohrer painting in ink and gouache that suggests snow on a field, but also an affinity with Robert Ryman.

"Water Is Best" (the title was inspired by the ancient Greek lyric poet Pindar, who presumably enjoyed more than his share of sun and wrote that water was worth as much as gold) is a celebration featuring paintings by 11 gallery artists.

Ena Swansea's *Windy Day*, showing a curious seagull on the beach in closeup, looking not unlike an elderly, stalk-legged beach bum, is a charmer; Alex Katz's *Black Brook V* evokes deeper, elegiac thoughts.

Thomas Chimes' *Waterfall* looks like our own mysterious Schuylkill as it drops precipitously just before passing below the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

LOCKS GALLERY

