

Two Coats of Paint

Divergent Simplicities: Diana Horowitz and Janice Redman

By Margaret McCann | April 18, 2025



Diana Horowitz, *Tiber from Nazzano*, 2023, oil on linen, 5 x 7 inches.



Janice Redman, *Gorge*, 2029, ceramic, metal, cotton, and wax, 9 1/2 x 5 x 5 inches.

In two shows at Bookstein Projects, excess and essence complement one other from opposite ends of simplicity. Janice Redman's "Rough Alchemy" in the side gallery presents mostly small, hand wrought sculptures that project vulnerability, earnestly offering themselves in all their imperfections to our subjective examination. In the main gallery, Diana Horowitz's "Light is a Place" highlights objectivity in landscape paintings that broadcast optical truth from across the room despite their tiny size. In portraying distance, they keep their own, reticently holding the walls.



Diana Horowitz, *South from Uptown #2*, 2022, oil on board, 6 x 6 inches.

Horowitz has long painted New York City, including from the World Trade Center. Taking advantage of a good perch, her elevated cityscapes often become series, depicting different times of day, à la Monet. Views are cropped to geometrically accord with varying canvas proportions. Harmoniously simulated soft color is subordinate to accurate tones in *South from Uptown #2*. Light's passage intersects with the skyline's geometric constellation of shapes. The lattice-like visual facade of Manhattan, a product of



Diana Horowitz, *Tiber from Nazzano*, 2023, oil on linen, 5 x 7 inches.

many rectilinear skyscrapers built on a grid, activates cubist dynamics. Blocks of light and shadow, coordinated compositionally, energetically interlock like syncopated pistons in an engine.

Tiber from Nazzano shows the rhythms of the Roman river's curves. But playful zig zags back into space are quelled by Horowitz's sober scrutiny of tones. Perceptual honesty and painterly

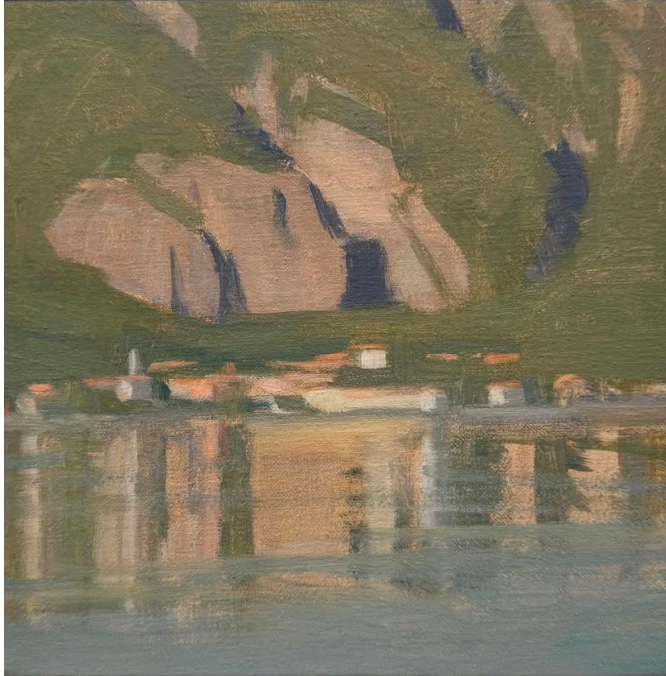
economy are in sympathy with Morandi's landscapes. But Horowitz's successive, deftly placed, rapid brush marks possess a cleverness Morandi's slow and halting observations – evincing his study of the charmingly awkward Cezanne – would eschew. Even on a small scale, Horowitz fences with the brush, a show of swift skill echoing Corot's expeditious studies.

Despite *Siena, February's* winter designation, the haze suggests uncomfortable humidity, relieved somewhat by shady foreground umbrella pines. Such meteorological attunement echoes Constable's or Turner's studies. Unlike the Romantics, however, Horowitz doesn't exaggerate tones. Doing so would distort the phenomenon of light that to her eye characterizes place. Her optical sensitivity channels Impressionist values that influenced twentieth-century realists like Horowitz's teacher Lennart Anderson. He began as an Abstract Expressionist, and Horowitz's descriptive shorthand flirts with abstraction. Without the odd patch of



Diana Horowitz, *Siena, February*, 2024, oil on linen, 6 x 6 inches.

yellow-orange lower left establishing mid-ground, space would collapse, and the ocher shape lower-right wouldn't read as a sunlit building. A daring visual gestalt surprisingly coheres.



Diana Horowitz, *Reflections, Onno*, 2022, oil on linen, 6 x 6 inches

Braced within a square, a section of a sunny mountainside hovers halfway up the canvas in *Reflections, Onno*. Its patchworked reflection is mirrored on the slightly moving water below. Geometry is negotiated with democratic attention to the motif like that Monet trailblazed at La Grenouille and Etretat, or Sisley applied to Paris. But unlike them, Horowitz's brush doesn't indulge textural sensuality. Up close, illusion disintegrates like a mirage, as indecorous brushwork, thin paint layers, and the canvas weave loom, confounding our understanding of how illusion was created. Viewers are pushed back, positioned like the painter staring

and squinting at her faraway motif, deciding how to address it.

Probably deterred by its scenic drama, temperamental aloofness is nowhere to be seen in Horowitz's exciting fireworks series. *Fireworks, Anguillara* shares graphic features with Diebenkorn's vivid interiors and landscapes. Horowitz's usual route toward clarity is somewhat reversed here: bold foreground shapes of light present quasi-abstractly from afar, while understanding is revealed proximally. There, the viewer feels privy to the image's secrets: discerning tones of light on the distant water activate the continuum of space preceding it, where flat shapes become light defining rooftop planes.



Diana Horowitz, *Fireworks, Anguillara*, 2024, oil on board, 12 x 8 inches.



Janice Redman, *Settle*, 2020, leather, cotton, and paper wasp comb, 7 x 3 3/4 x 2 1/2 inches.

Unlike Horowitz's dispassionate work, Janice Redman's sculptures trigger emotional engagement. Titles suggest commands or wistful complaint. *Settle* sags from the wall like a travel organizer that has been on the road too long, brimming with history. Reminiscent of Claes Oldenburg's out of shape, soft sculpture, an unforgiving sense of gravity silences pop humor. Experiential textures like those of Eva Hesse inform organic volumes. Small red cotton balls, dropped as though in a Connect 4 child's game, nest like insects into, or sprout like mushrooms from, the exposed guts of weary leather compartments. The object is on the edge of intrusively oversharing, but bright, energetic color tinges the sense of neglect and fatigue with optimism.

Bundle brings the packages of Christo to mind, but associations move quickly from the metaphysical to things handled everyday. Dough-like sacks hug rolling pins, all strapped and buckled in safely like a pig in a blanket, swaddled infant, ankle weight, weathered backpack, or grungy straitjacket. Guston's piled objects also come to mind, but *Bundle* feels less defeated, more defended. Like Rauschenberg's combines,



Janice Redman, *Bundle*, 2025, wood, metal, cotton, and sand, 4 1/2 x 8 1/4 x 2 3/4 inches.

collaged elements reference their former roles – a rolling pin both tool of nurturance and old-school domestic weapon – melded into new, quasi-abstract configurations. Redman's sensitivity to materials and edges evokes the intimate, inward attention Vuillard imparted to

pictures of his familiars sewing. As though under a weighted blanket, things feel securely fastened together.



Janice Redman, *Foundation*, 2000, sand, cotton, wool, and wood, 60 x 18 x 18 inches.

The less enclosed *Foundation*, an earlier work, doesn't look as homeless – ineptly independent – as Redman's more recent pieces; it's cleaned up and presentable. Downward motivity is implied via heavy plaster bags leading to stones spreading from the load. But the pile upon the seat also implicates ascending space, and with that, the sensation of difficulty mustering energy to get up from a chair. This activation of space resonates with Horowitz's distances, and the smooth, clear forms with her calm, but without any stress on immediate experience. Instead, vague recollection is incited – repetitive actions of placing, rearranging, perhaps ineffective but well-intentioned organizing, or mind-numbing duty. Delicate shadows cast doubt, but generalized forms suppress discomfort, smoothing over the lived specificity of Redman's recent work.

In *Gorge*, a spoon transforms something potentially grotesque into a whimsical form. Despite or maybe because of the stains, the stuffed, compact,

and singular object approaches the notion of cuddly, with mystery preventing descent into mere craft. Meret Oppenheim's furry teacup springs to mind, though pathetic feeling – childhood recollection, comfort food – separates Redman's approach from surrealism's randomness, notwithstanding their Freudian affinities. The larger longing that indulgence implies is offset by manipulation of individual forms; each part carries some sense of having defined its own boundaries. Yet as these convex shapes push out with some satisfaction – possibly in the act of transforming pain into aesthetic pleasure – control is questioned by the bounded emptiness a geographical gorge suggests. Against Horowitz's circumspection, Redman lets it all hang out, an endoscope to Horowitz's telescope. In



Janice Redman, *Gorge*, 2019, ceramic, metal, cotton, and wax, 9 1/2 x 5 x 5 inches.

each show, variations of “less” and “more” are directed towards some focused core, offering a compelling contrast between momentary presence and cozily entropic experience.

“Diana Horowitz: Light is a Place” and “Janice Redman: Rough Alchemy,” Bookstein Projects, 39 East 78th Street, 4th Floor, New York, NY. Through April 18, 2025.

About the author: Painter and art writer Margaret McCann teaches at the Art Students League. She has shown her work at Antonia Jannone in Milan and been reviewed in *La Repubblica*, *Corriere della Sera*, and the *Huffington Post*. She edited *The Figure* (Skira/Rizzoli, 2014) for the New York Academy of Art and has written reviews for *Painters’ Table* and *Art New England* as well as *Two Coats of Paint*.