

Gallery Shows Recent Works Of Impressionist Max Moran

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By RANDALL PEASE

At this time Max Moran is an impressionist. He is displaying the best of his series of Vineyard landscapes at the Hermine Merel Smith Gallery on South Summer street in Edgartown this week. At other times Mr. Moran has done nonrepresentational work, and has displayed and sold his paintings in galleries from San Francisco to the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. He has been around both the art world and the real world, and his experience shows.

He is a skillful painter. Perhaps the surest indication of skill in representational painting is the quality of light achieved. Space and color are primary skills. But light requires all the primary talents and something more, like spirit and inspiration.

Vineyard Garden is a typical Island garden — full of simple flowers, like daisies and lilies and cornflowers, obviously cared for, but not manicured, and overhung by a small dark tree and a wall of English ivy. The garden is at the center of the large painting, flaming with bright colors. The tree and wall grow dark with rich shades of green and brown. And in the background, beyond the garden, is a Vineyard Haven street many know by heart.

It is luscious to look at. But what you feel is the light — the cadmium yellow that sets ablaze the little garden, as if you caught it at that strange, very private moment, when a garden celebrates. In the darkness of the tree and the ivy lurk lavender and maroon highlights. The viewer is drawn into the background of the painting, and there, enflaming a patch of wall in the distance is a peculiar kind of light that is a trademark of this series of paintings — a splash of brilliant cadmium yellow that emanates from somewhere beyond the painting.

This special Max Moran effect of light appears in the depths of most of the paintings on display. In the Back of Marie's Path, the path is painted as if it were a tunnel. The little white gate is pushed open, the trees arch over the path, and at the end of the path is that light again. Above the path are trees with thousands of individual leaves — the winding lavender shaded branches weave and dance higher and higher

until they nearly separate themselves from the representational in a celebration of darkness. Some of the branches curl from the canopy into the tunnel. These are touched with light, foreshadowings of the light to come.

The paintings are evocative, partly because they refuse to stay still. They are representational in the sense that Island residents will recognize Dead Man's Curve or William street. But then the leaves and the darkness and the light deepen from impressionism to expressionism.

Many of the paintings represent roads, or paths that lead into the darkness of overhanging trees, and then out into the light. Mr. Moran said, "Many Island roads are overshadowed like that." A sense of melancholy hangs about these roads and paths like the scent of flowers, as if you were leaving something behind — a Vineyard garden perhaps, or a favorite childhood house.

Mr. Moran says, "Everyone has these ambiguous feelings about tunnels from birth. You're not sure you want to go through them." What the painter has captured in this exhibit may be one reason people always return to the Vineyard — because the Island is reminiscent of some deeper return.

The paintings are beautiful to look at, and strangely private experiences. Even in the crowded midst of the art exhibit you encounter a Vineyard garden, or walk down a street so quiet and so lonely that even you are not there to disturb the privacy.

Piano-Cello Concert

Pianist David Crohan will perform with cellist Caroline Worthington on Friday evening, August 22, at 8 o'clock in the Tabernacle in Oak Bluffs, the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association has announced.

Mr. Crohan will perform a group of Chopin Polonaises and the duo will present a Beethoven sonata for cello and piano, the Sonata in A Major, Op. 69.

He will also be playing selections from Richard Rodgers' Carousel, and other popular songs.