

CHLOE LAMB

COLOR AND FORM

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BIRNAM WOOD GALLERIES

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INTRODUCTION

An English painter with a remarkably original style, Chloe Lamb combines the best elements of traditional painting with a modern sensibility. Her dense fields of color suggest the work of 20th Century American painters like Wolf Kahn or Milton Avery, but the sensibility is clearly European. Influenced by the Modern British School, especially Keith Vaughn and Ivan Hitchens, she spent the early part of her career working solely in pastel. Though her early work was much tighter and far more detailed, over the last decade Ms. Lamb's style has evolved into a looser, more painterly style which often seems to walk to the edge of abstraction; then step back to a more representational image.

Still, it is the deft use of color and aggressive brushwork that defines all her current compositions, especially the landscapes with their bold suggestion of movement. Lamb is especially skilled at layering pigments of varying density to create a sense of a rapidly changing sky or light. In paintings like *Ochre and Magenta*, she uses a classic – and powerful – diagonal composition in conjunction with a shift from a dark to a light palette and upward brushwork to indicate a moving front over this tumultuous landscape.

While Lamb uses thin veils of paint and glazes in her skies, the ground and horizon are indicated by areas of rich opaque paint that seem firmly anchored to the earth. If the divisions between earth and sky are heightened by the contrasts of texture and density, Lamb unifies her compositions with incised lines, areas of scraping and unexpected swirls of paint. These scrawls and swirls also serve to add an almost musical quality to the undulating hills, dales and lakes that Lamb captures on canvas.

Lamb has a nuanced, sophisticated style. Her rich brushwork and layering combine to create compositions that offer new perspectives on each viewing. Lamb's work is deeply rooted in the feel of the natural world, and the light in her landscapes seems to shift with the actual light in the room. This ability to capture the natural world is in keeping with her connection to the Modern British School. As her mentor Ivan Hitchens said, "I seek to recreate the truth of nature by making my own song about it."

Still-lives form another important part of Lamb's oeuvre. Vigorous brushwork, richly layered pigments and textures are all used to create a sense of drama in compositions that are anything but still. Lamb shows a more representational style in images like *Snowdrops and Clementine* or *Small Pots and Flowers*, yet she arrays these scenes of bottles, fruit and flowers against completely abstracted bands of energetically applied color. These masterfully painted backgrounds could stand as compositions in their own right, and bear a striking similarity to the color field paintings of American masters like Mark Rothko. Lamb merges abstraction with representation, and creates a visual language all her own in these still-lives.

Lamb's figurative works are also executed with vigorous brushwork, but are notable for their sense of generous humanity. She paints figures seemingly captured in private moments, absorbed in their own worlds. Lamb abstracts her figures by rendering bodies as shapes and patches of color, and does not describe individual features. This gives a timeless quality to her figurative work, and allows the viewer both to enter the scene and to project their own emotions onto the scene. *A Tender Moment*, an aptly named image of two figures about to kiss, a poignant thin line of space separating their upturned cheeks, is a classic example of Lamb's lovely figurative work. Never sappy or trite, Lamb's paintings have a persistent emotional resonance.

Lamb chooses classic subjects and makes them her own, modernizing landscapes, still lifes and figural works alike with her energetic brushwork and balanced shifts of opacity, transparency, tone, and texture. She has created an enduring visual vocabulary and a compelling personal style that continues to evolve. Lamb's works across genres are unified by her lyrical sense of color and by her ability to both abstract an image and to keep it rooted in the real.

Chloe Lamb has had four successful solo exhibitions in London, and has been part of several group shows in Britain as well. This will be Lamb's first solo exhibition in the United States. Birnam Wood Galleries has been showing Lamb's work since 2002, and is pleased to be able to offer a comprehensive view of this compelling artist's work.