

reviews: new york

Margaret Garrett

Birnam Wood Galleries

Margaret Garrett's richly colored abstract paintings brim with small lines that appear to flutter like birds' wings. A dancer before she turned to art, Garrett paints with a grace that captures the elusive, fleeting qualities of movement, with delicate brushstrokes against deeply textured backgrounds. Each of the 18 works in this show, called "Tuning Fields," established rhythmic worlds of color and line that conveyed a range of emotions.

In the large, glorious *Tuning Fields 172* (2010), delicate forms resembling tiny blue birds seem to flock together against a rich, rosy, and uneven background whose surface is dotted with shadows that provide depth. Furthermore, rather than being birds, the shapes are simply masses of small, curving lines that give a general sense of nature in motion. In many of Garrett's works, such as misty *Tuning Fields 290* (2012), we feel as if we can see beneath the filmy pale-gray surface punctuated by thin, amber and pale-orange marks. A lyrical, calligraphic quality defined everything in this show, with the patterns of the mark-making defining the artist's personal poetic language.

Garrett often employs a wide palette. For *Tuning Fields 276* (2012) she selected autumnal shades of yellow, orange, and brown, and interspersed them with specks of blue that bring to mind the sky. And underlying all the surface

movement is a gray background that provides a certain unifying serenity. Among the most compelling of the works was *Tuning Fields 302* (2013), a study of rosy pinks and reds with an overlay of white, gauzy shapes. The little lines behind all the color could evoke both language and a musical score. They might also conjure a mass of rose petals. Therein lies the poetry of these paintings.

--Valerie Gladstone



Margaret Garrett, *Tuning Fields 302*, 2013, acrylic on linen, 43" x 63". Birnam Wood Galleries