

Lorna Ritz remarks on a farm-to-city NYC debut 20 years in the making



Lorna Ritz, June Landscape (2016). Oil on canvas. 19×18 in. Image is courtesy the artist and YveYANG Gallery.

By JOSH NILAND August 19, 2025

Over the past month, the simmering midsummer streets of Lower Manhattan have just received a much-needed injection of plein air thanks to Berkshires-based artist Lorna Ritz's squelching solo debut at the YveYANG Gallery in Tribeca.

On view now until August 16th, the exhibition neatly recounts two decades of epistemological yearnings from the 78-year-old, who is solidly part of a lineage of fellow AbEx adherents that stems from Hans Hoffman and has seen elder inhabitants of its tributaries like Larry Poons, Helen Frankenthaler, and Robert De Niro Sr. shine in major post-war and contemporary sales in New York in recent years.



Lorna Ritz, And the Light Came Pouring In (2023). Oil on canvas. 48×40 in. Image is courtesy the artist and YveYANG Gallery.

Ritz, who came of age in the declining early-60s industrial apogee of Worcester, Massachusetts, can claim another famous Hoffman—the Yippie counterculture icon Abbie—as a childhood friend and inspiration (“Abbie and I gave out fliers at the Newport Jazz Festival. Eventually [he] wanted me to participate more, and even called my house asking for me”) and works in a manner reminiscent of Monet’s yearning for the purity of open outdoor environments.

She describes her painting as a series of ‘call-and-response’ impressionistic treatises on the mind’s eye and its inherent transposition of nature. Pigments mixed to exacting standards that enhance the anchoring contrasts of sunshine yellow and sky blue—barring voracity, but inviting our attention to the pensive underlayers beneath their surfaces—are the key to this escape. The abstracted landscapes that made the debut trek to NYC thereafter resolve to address what she sees are the “formalistic visual problems” of painting, of which her predecessors were so adamant to articulate.



Lorna Ritz, First Morning Birdsong (2024). Oil on canvas. 22×16 in. Image is courtesy the artist and YveYANG Gallery

“I was a student of a student of Hans Hofmann. Jim [Gahagan] preached space through the relationship of colors, something I needed and did not know. My painting was representative in the 60’s, but I paid attention to what Jim was saying, that objectifying space with objects deterred from the expressiveness of color. [He said] ‘Don’t place a line that outlines the object, only use a line if it is independent of the object, having a life of its own.’ That really hit me hard,” she recalled, speaking of her late mentor, who himself owes a great deal to Hoffman, an esteemed artistic collaborator and fellow traveler in the city’s crowded post-war art scene.



Lorna Ritz, Autumn Prayer (1988). Oil on canvas. 60x66in. Image is courtesy the artist and YveYANG Gallery.

In the days since, Ritz has gone on to become a more diligent and patient colorist, learning more about herself and her process while teaching students at Brown, Dartmouth College, and RISD, among other stops around New England. It makes more sense, upon seeing the suite of nine works, that she would become such an able instructor. The atmospheric, ‘farm-to-table’ quality combining the handmade and rural studio practice are their carrying qualities. As such, some of the best inclusions can be taken as renditions of the world she brought in.



*Lorna Ritz, Above the Blue Night, Moon (2016). Oil on canvas. 53x46in.
Image is courtesy the artist and YveYANG Gallery.*

“I have lived in places, such as Colombia and northern Vermont, where the mountains are higher and more distant than here,” she says of her barn studio near Amherst. “I always felt I could reach out and touch them here. They were so close, and responsive to the cloud shadows and light falling on them, as though they were moving. As a colorist, light and shadow is what I study, teaching me new color harmonies for which I would search that day. It changes constantly. The more I draw these mountains, the more I want to draw these mountains. One painting grew out of the previous one and continues to this day, allowing all the expressive potential of color to be the subject. Why else paint, if not to feel?”



Lorna Riz: Painting is on view through August 16 at YveYANG Gallery, 12 Wooster Street, New York City