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Retrospective: James Del Grosso & Dennis Ramsay at The Grenning Gallery in Sag Harbor

by Kathryn Menu



James Del Grosso Maplight 18 x 24 oil painting

The Greening Gallery, on Washington Street in Sag Harbor, will host an opening reception for Retrospective: James Del Grosso and Dennis Ramsay on Saturday October 4 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. The show will hang through November 2.

This retrospective highlights the work of two pioneers in the Poetic Realist movement, who have recently passed on. James Del Grosso (1941- 2013) and Dennis Ramsay (1925 - 2009) were swimming way against the stream of their time. Born in the early part of the 20th century, the artists hit their prime just as abstract painting was peaking in the mid century. Both chose to look to nature for inspiration and researched the old masters and any living painter for classical training at a time in art history that was anything, if not hostile to classical painters.

Mr. Del Grosso lived and worked on the East End for five decades, living as a full time resident of Springs since 1986 with his wife, Eve Eliot. Painting at home since the age of 9, Mr. Del Grosso attended Cooper Union in the 1960s, and as a result was a center of the New York Abstract Expressionist movement, and painted as such. He worked as an art therapist in a psychiatric facility as a volunteer earlier in his career. According to his widow, Mr. Del Grosso always believed that painting was a healing force in a century that seemed to be dedicated to ego and all its pitfalls.

Dennis Ramsay was another hero of the poetic realist movement and the Grenning Gallery will showcase six of his still lifes in this show. Mr. Ramsay's stepson, Graham Leader—a filmmaker in New York and on the East End—contacted Laura Grenning about the showcase in an effort to honor the artist.

“Interestingly, he brought these tempera grassa (pigment and oil) paintings into the gallery, without the uncanny coincidental knowledge that my own painting instructor and now gallery artist, Nelson H. White, also studied with the famous Italian painter Pietro Annigoni,” said Ms. Grenning. “Dennis Ramsay’s work and underlying motivations to observe and capture the truth in nature make him a Grenning Gallery artist in spirit, and kudos to Mr. Leader for spotting this.”

Mr. Ramsay studied under Mr. Annigoni in Florence before the London born artist returned home to teach painting, ending his career Australia where he moved in 1986. Throughout his life Ramsay had gallery shows in England and Australia and has work in many private collections as well as the National Gallery in London and in Scotland.