

ON-SITE
Rackstraw Downes & Stanley Lewis
April 29 – July 28, 2023
Opening Reception: Saturday, April 29, 4 – 6 PM



Rackstraw Downes, *A Fence at the Periphery of a Jersey City Scrap Metal Yard*, 1993, Oil on canvas, 15 x 116 1/4 inches

“Paint what you see! Paint what you see!” so exclaims Stanley Lewis to a group visiting his retrospective at American University in 2007, describing the mammoth challenge that he faces daily in his own work. Meanwhile Rackstraw Downes traverses the country conscious of season, light, ditches and power lines to find a site that satisfies “some inner need”.

Betty Cuningham Gallery is pleased to open, **ON-SITE**, a two-person show featuring major paintings by **Rackstraw Downes** and **Stanley Lewis**. Opening reception on Saturday, April 29th, 4 – 6 PM.

Both Downes and Lewis are on-site painters. Both fight for ‘honest’ observation, with a shared interest in the particular and the mundane. However, they differ greatly by method, by subject, by need, and even sometimes by humor. While Rackstraw will travel miles to sites which intrigue him, Stanley stays put and paints where he is. In a 2006 gallery video Rackstraw speaks about his frustration to do it right: *“Do it again, Downes, and get it right this time, the way it REALLY is!! And I love that!”*

In a letter to the gallery Stanley writes about trying to get it right: *“To do my BEST means I go very slowly and try to get everything as good as I can before I move on – I always have to redo everything almost 100 times. Very Slow process. After my eyes warm up, I see every blade of grass.”*

Both share the need for adjustment and change. Downes will often find the need to extend his canvas, to include a more than 180° view, splicing on sections on left or right, top or bottom. Lewis on the other hand self-corrects, piling paper over paper, incorporating tears and sometimes staples or nails all towards getting it right. Downes’ canvases surround the viewer demanding a virtual visit to the location, and often exposing an environmental/political message. On the other hand, Lewis’ thickly worked, bas-relief canvases physically share the viewer’s space and open a complex experience of discovery.

A juxtaposition of these two painters, who work to capture the truth of their subjects, opens-up the question of personal observation and objectivity: Painting and building on each moment in time through their personally constructed windows.

“Paint what you SEE!”

“Do it again! And get it RIGHT this time!”

This exhibition is accompanied by an online viewing room and will be open to the public through Friday, July 28, 2023.



Stanley Lewis, *Winslow Park, Westport*, 2010-2014, Oil on canvas, 21 1/4 x 35 1/4 inches

For bibliographies, biographies, publications, and all other artist information, please visit bettycunninghamgallery.com.

Listing Information: Betty Cuningham Gallery is located at 15 Rivington Street, b/t Bowery and Chrystie Street

T: 212-242-2772 E: info@bettycunninghamgallery.com W: www.bettycunninghamgallery.com

Public Transportation: F train to Second Ave, 6 Train to Spring Street, JZ Train to Bowery

Gallery Hours: Tues- Sat, 10am- 6pm