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Lois Dodd: Recent Paintings

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Lois Dodd (b. 1927) has been painting compositionally idiosyncratic views of the architecture, vegetation, landscape and traces of human presence in rural Maine for six decades. During 2012-13, "Catching the Light," an overdue museum retrospective of Ms. Dodd's art, appeared at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Mo., and, appropriately enough, at the Portland Museum of Art in Maine. That the exhibition never made it to New York—where Ms. Dodd was the only woman among the founders of the important abstract expressionist venue, the Tanager Gallery; had her first solo show there in 1954; and bucked the tide by staying resolutely figurative—only adds to her status as a quiet heroine of stick-to-it-or-guns, painterly painting.

This show of almost 30 pictures, including a dozen portraits, as it were, of flowers, is Ms. Dodd's first gallery outing since her retrospective. It's honest, unflashy, done the hard way (Ms. Dodd's thin oil paint on Masonite technique doesn't permit second chances) and charming.

Her small renderings of a house in the snow, or the moon over a mud flat at 4 a.m., are masterly without preening as such. So it might seem picky and ungrateful to write so much as a word of mild doubt about an exhibition by this venerated pleinair painter. Sometimes, though, as when a vermilion shirt flutters too brightly on a clothesline that's set against a delicately painted drab olive house and a green bush, or a flower is blown up to fit a format nearly 5 feet tall, Ms. Dodd reaches for obvious attentiongetters. She's had great shows. This is simply a good one.