

ALEXANDRE

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ART IN REVIEW

ART IN REVIEW; Loren MacIver

By ROBERTA SMITH

Tibor de Nagy Gallery

724 Fifth Avenue, near 57th Street

Manhattan

Through Feb. 5

The first exhibition of Loren Mac Iver's work since her death in 1998, at the age of 89, focuses on the little-known work that this eccentric American painter of landscapes, cityscapes and the rooms she inhabited made in the late 1960's while living in Paris and summering in the South of France.

Half abstract images of vineyards, cypress trees and fields, they are rendered in oil paint that has the dryness of pastel and the lightness of watercolor, and they make effective use of untouched paper. Although undeniably delicate, some of them also possess an almost infernal energy. One of the most energetic works is "La Vigne," a thicket of brown and orange branches that might be on fire. Elsewhere the mistral blows through the pictures in forceful parallel lines, flattening trees and vines, or the cypresses writhe and twist.

But the prevailing mood is genial, especially in a series of pastel renderings of flowers and outdoor luncheons on a terrace. Best of all may be the quick, tiny sketches in ballpoint pen or pencil that fill small notebooks displayed in a vitrine. Since the sketchbooks are intact, more of these images are reproduced in the show's catalog than can be seen in the show. They look terrific. ROBERTA SMITH

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