

ALEXANDRE

The New York Times

Art & Design



By KEN JOHNSON
Published: January 9, 2014

Marvin Bileck: ‘Thimbleton Bridge’ and Emily Nelligan: ‘Drawings’

The two sets of drawings in this wonderful exhibition come from opposite yet complementary poles. Marvin Bileck (1920-2005) drew his from 1965 to 1970 for a children’s book that was never published. They look as if they were made early in the 20th century. Working with sharply pointed colored and graphite pencils on pale yellow pages, he drew a fantastical tale of a mental trolley ride through a windy world populated by lively people in Victorian garb and all kinds of animals, from elephants and giraffes to cats and dogs.

Along with rustic villages and vignettes of homey indoor clutter, all are folded into fragmentary tempest-tossed landscapes of precisely delineated trees, grasses and flowers, often rendered in eye-straining miniature.

Winding throughout are the neatly lettered words of a poem created by Mr. Bileck and the children’s book author and illustrator Ashley Bryan. It nicely mirrors the escapist imagery, as in: “The journey’s as silent as snowfalls at night./Folks think we’re nearby, but we’ve slipped from sight.”

Emily Nelligan, by contrast, looks to the real, external world, albeit with transcendentalist eyes. Her small, soft-focus charcoal drawings from the past decade depict places on and around Great Cranberry Island in Maine, where she summered with Mr. Bileck, her husband of more than 50 years.

They are as exquisitely delicate as Mr. Bileck’s but sacrifice detail for a misty realism and sometimes verge on pure abstraction. With velvety blacks describing land and forest masses, and pearlescent whites in skies and reflective waters, they are haunting, at once mournful and ecstatic.

291 Grand Street, New York, New York 10002

25 East 73rd Street, 2nd Floor, New York, New York 10021 212.755.2828 alexandregallery.com

ALEXANDRE GALLERY ALEXANDRE FINE ART INC. ESTABLISHED 1996