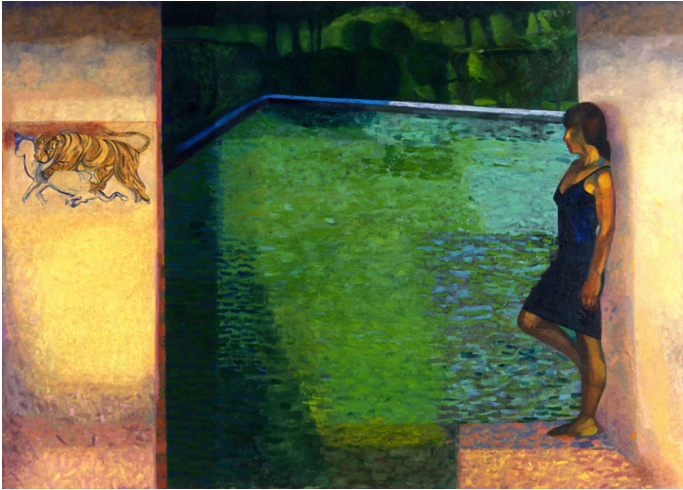


ROBERT STEELE GALLERY

Carole Robb

Women and Water



Lake at the Villa d'Este, 2003-06, Oil on linen, 60x84 in.

I was in Tivoli at the Villa d'Este, a 16th century summer palace built by a Cardinal. Water trickles from the mouths of beasts and the breasts of goddesses. It begins as a trickle and ends in cascades on the lower terrace. The site was closing as I made my way out and saw a woman lying on a bench, one knee raised and an arm shielding her eyes from the sun. I saw her again as I left. This time she stood with one leg pressed against a wall like a stork. She was wearing a black cocktail dress, an odd choice for a tourist site. The next morning I hired a model, bought a similar dress and reconstructed the pose, working on-site at the Villa. The paintings in the "Women and Water" series were begun at that time and painted in Rome, Venice, London and New York. By placing the women close to water, the two elements result in more than the sum of these elements. Women in a pictorial plot. Things half-seen and half-understood.

- Carole Robb, 2006.

Great art, great experiences, so often begin with such small gestures, such inconsequential details: the quiet murmur of water in motion, the color of light at a time of day, the angle of a limb, the depth of a shadow. For years now, Carole Robb's paintings have plumbed the emotional range of those shadows, the quiet *frisson* of contrasting images. *Helen of Troy* surveying the action through a pair of binoculars, for instance; *Ulysses* in a business suit; a smoking, looming *Vesuvius*, not unlike the *Duomo* in Florence, heavy and ever-present mass always on the edge, and always at the edge of one's periphery.

The paintings in *Women and Water* are flush with such contrasts, paintings whose deceptive stillness conceal the rush of emotional and intellectual content. Women and water; women *are* water. We dive into the past, the past rushes to the present. Past and present commingle toward a decaying future. All, after all, is now.

René Grayre, 2007