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ARTS & LETTERS

GALLERY-GOING

By DAVID COHEN

For a more traditional but no less spirited pursuit of the lyrical in landscape, be sure to catch Ying Li's show at SoHo's Painting Center before it closes this weekend. Eighteen works reveal bewildering diversity both of influence and of pictorial ambition.

She has touch to die for in terms of bravura painthandling and innate good taste. In her best works, she manages to endow brushstroke with the power of metaphor. Different brushes and their tips sometimes converge in a single canvas in a Dionysian orgy of painterliness.

Often, in works that look to Turner or Boudin or to more contemporary examples like Louis Finkelstein or Stuart Shils, Ms. Li is inspired to gorgeous but familiar effects, to a comfortable expression of the pleasures of landscape. In other works, she pushes further towards abstraction, almost offering a pastiche de Kooning, for instance, in "Riverstroke #1" (2003), but with no less tasteful a result.

Only in two or three works, however, does a restlessness reveals itself, an indication that *jouissance* is not enough. "Vermont, Deep Fall" (2003), for instance, shares the frenzied logic of Soutine, to suggest that expressiveness and a sense of structure need not be mutually exclusive. Ms. Li's best paintings pulsate with emotional and pictorial complexity.