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ART IN REVIEW

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Art in Review - Fairfield Porter

By KAREN ROSENBERG

Few painters are more synonymous with an East Coast summer than Fairfield Porter, who spent the warm months in the Hamptons or on Penobscot Bay in Maine. The sunlit paintings in this small show at Michael Rosenfeld — landscapes, still lifes and a few portraits — won't disappoint.

"July" (1971), the largest painting at 80 by 100 inches, shows you exactly how the month should be experienced: from a cluster of lawn chairs on some luscious, pine-shaded estate. The grass is a perfectly seasonal yellow-green, lush and drenched in that warm midsummer light.

The still lifes are just as vivid and casual: bunches of blooms just plucked from the garden ("Anemone and Daffodil," 1965) or the field ("Buttercups," 1972). And smaller landscapes like "Daffodils and Pear Tree" (1973) are the sort of thing Matisse might have painted had he traded Nice for New England.

Porter's portraiture doesn't always measure up to his landscapes. The examples here aren't bad, though, even if some of them disturb the exhibition's air of privileged relaxation. A shaggy-haired "John MacWhinnie" (1972) wears boots and a heavy overcoat, and the subject of "Laurence in Two Lights" (1963) is lost in the camouflagelike shadows on his khaki jacket.

There's a winter landscape too, the oil sketch "Snow on South Main Street" (1974). But it's always summer somewhere in Porter's world.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/30/arts/design/30galleries-002.html>



July, 1971, oil on canvas, 100" x 80 1/4", signed

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