

# Porter breathes into 'Still Life' with trademark bright colors

BY TRACEY O'SHAUGHNESSY REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN November 23, 2022



"Beacon Falls, CT" (May 8, 2020), Gouache on Arches paper, 7 x 6 in (Jennifer Terzian Gallery)

For the last 20 years, Bethany-based artist Amy Jean Porter has drawn more than 1,200 species of animals – including birds misquoting hip-hop lyrics or speaking a language foreign to their natural habitat.

The Jennifer Terzian Gallery in Litchfield is hosting Porter's solo exhibition in Connecticut, "Still Life," through Sunday.

The showing, which features Porter's trademark bright, bold colors, includes more than 50 drawings she has created in the past six years. These are animals and objects most of us know and rarely scrutinize – a squirrel

perking up with his prize, a crow masterfully surveying its unlikely, pastel-like surroundings, a bunch of bananas freckled with decay.

Porter's four drawings of bananas are color studies found on the kitchen counter. They feature the vibrant yellows of fresh bananas to the deep black-greens of rotten bananas and an array of browns in between. The bananas are a memento mori in fruit, reminding us of the ephemeral nature of life.

The drawings tell a story of daily life in small moments and slow growth. Some are carefully rendered studies in gouache, jewel-like and precise: forget-me-nots and buttercups, a winter bouquet and found feather, three versions of the North Star made in one night.

In the last gallery, Porter's series of colored pencil drawings examine the pieces of the outdoors we bring indoors, and the "the thin window seam between domestic and wild," as gallery owner Terzian said. "Sometimes she shows the trees and landscape through the windows, and sometimes the outside world is a blank space, reflecting our gaze back in."



*"Spotted Bananas" (2022), by Amy Jean Porter, Gouache on Arches paper, 15 x 19 in  
(Jennifer Terzian Gallery)*

In her third series of drawings, Porter celebrates the small interactions we have with common animals that live around us, including an appreciation of rodents, pigeons, deer and songbirds. These drawings are paired with her found poems of patterns made in spring streams and ponds. "The drawing-poems suggest that nature is a source to be read; its patterns are a language to be learned," according to a statement by the gallery.

*"Crow" (2017), by Amy Jean Porter,  
Gouache on Arches paper, 11 x 10  
in (Jennifer Terzian Gallery)*

Taken together, Porter's drawings are at turns delicate, colorful, humorous, wistful, bold, and always well observed. They encourage us to look closer at the world around us, and to appreciate and care for the natural world under our feet.

Porter's drawings and installations have been shown in solo shows in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Paris, and featured in publications such as Cabinet, jubilat, Lucky Peach, McSweeney's, The Awl and Topic. She