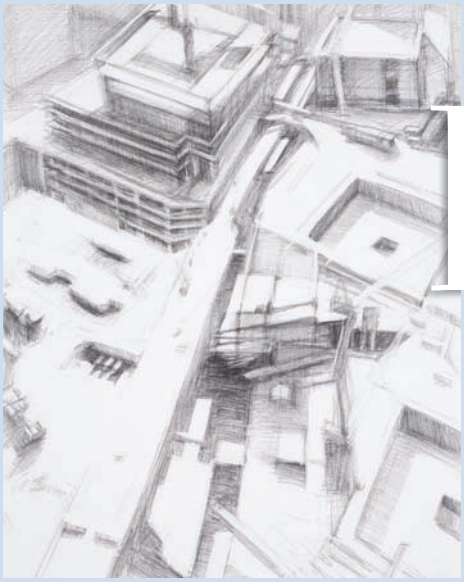


LEFT: ***World Trade Center Reflecting Pools and Harbor*** (oil, 42x30)

RIGHT: ***Ground Zero Construction, Vertical #2*** (graphite, 24x19)

the height of abstraction

The elevated viewpoint of Diana Horowitz's urban landscapes reduces her subject to simple geometric shapes and color relationships.

BY JUDITH FAIRLY

FOR MANY YEARS, Diana Horowitz rode her bicycle to lower Manhattan and painted views of the city from the observation deck on the 107th floor of the World Trade Center, first as a graduate student and later as part of a studio program. After the Twin Towers fell in 2001, she scouted around for a new location from which to paint and eventually landed on the 48th floor of the newly reconstructed 7 World Trade Center (WTC), where she has a 360-degree view of the city. "I've had an affinity for high vantage points for as long as I can remember," she says. "I think that's because of the way things become more abstracted."

Abstract Influences

As a child, Horowitz lived in a high-rise with an expansive view of upper Manhattan and later moved to Westbeth Artists Housing in Greenwich Village, where her parents still reside. The former site of Bell Laboratories, Westbeth is a complex that was redesigned in the late 1960s by the architect Richard Meier in his first public commission to provide living and working space for more than 300 artists of all disciplines. (Westbeth continues to be a thriving arts community whose residents have

All art images courtesy of Hirschl & Adler Modern, New York City

included photographer Diane Arbus, poets Ed Sanders and Muriel Rukeyser, theatre director Joseph Chaikin, actor Moses Gunn, and painters Hans Haacke, Anne Tabachnick and Robert De Niro Sr.)

Growing up in this rich creative environment, Horowitz never seriously considered a career in anything but art. Horowitz's mother, an abstract landscape painter, and all her friends studied with the great teacher and artist Hans Hofmann, who maintained that abstract art provides a way "to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak." Though she considers herself a "realist" painter, Horowitz has assimilated that early exposure to abstraction into her work and tends to approach a painting as a whole, like an abstract painter, rather than focusing on details.

web EXTRA

To read more painting advice from Horowitz and learn more about her 20th-century influences, go to www.artistsnetwork.com/tamonlinetoc.

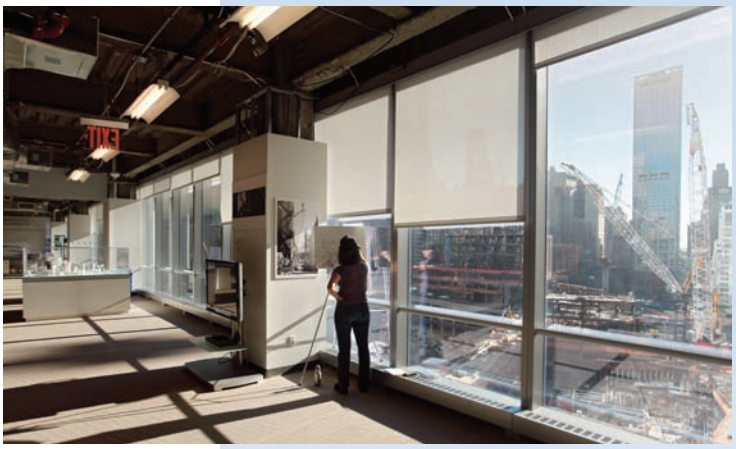
Distilling and Balancing

She begins by blocking in colors directly on the canvas rather than sketching out a design on the canvas. "I mostly just look at the shapes and the tones," she says, "maybe a little bit of drawing with a thin paint, but not very much and not all worked out. I do a lot of color mixing, but I don't limit my palette." Horowitz generally uses a white ground on prepared linen or a very thin oil wash of burnt umber, which provides a wider tonal range.

She works for about three hours on each painting until the light changes; then she sets it aside to dry until the next day. Like many plein air painters, she is forever "chasing the light" and usually has several works in process—a morning painting, an afternoon painting and an evening painting.

Horowitz works slowly, building up thin layers of paint, concentrating on the painting as a whole, reworking and improving upon what was painted the day before, adjusting and distilling shapes and tones. She endeavors to keep things open and in balance as she develops the painting. "A lot of my process is about balancing and trying to create tension to convey what attracted me to the subject," she says. "This usually involves taking away things so I can concentrate on the essential elements."

Each painting takes about two months to complete. Her greatest challenge is to avoid overworking a painting in its final stages. "It's hard to know when a painting is done," she says. "Sometimes they finish themselves because the light has changed." Painting *en plein air* at the Cloisters on a very cold day, she recognized the distinctive voice of an onlooker



"Plein Aerie" Studio

Diana Horowitz painted landscapes of New York City from the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center for 15 years until May, 2001. A few years after 7 World Trade Center was rebuilt in 2006, she took up residence on the 48th Floor—10,000 square feet of unleased raw space that provides a 360-degree view of the city. From this vantage point, Horowitz continues painting views of the city and of the construction next door of 1 World Trade Center (Freedom Tower).

To achieve an illusion of depth in paintings like Diana Horowitz's cityscapes, painters often employ aerial perspective, a technique in which distant objects are depicted as paler in color, less detailed and usually bluer than near objects.

The scientific explanation for this phenomenon, which is also called atmospheric perspective, is that light of short wavelength—blue light—is scattered most in the atmosphere, and the colors of distant dark objects appear bluer. Light of long wavelength—red light—is scattered least; thus, distant bright objects appear redder.

Aerial perspective techniques were used by Dutch landscape painters in the 15th century and were studied extensively by Leonardo da Vinci. Romantic landscapes painted by the 19th-century British artist J.M.W. Turner are distinguished by his ambitious use of aerial perspective.

ABOVE: ***New York Harbor and Ellis Island*** (oil, 13x26)

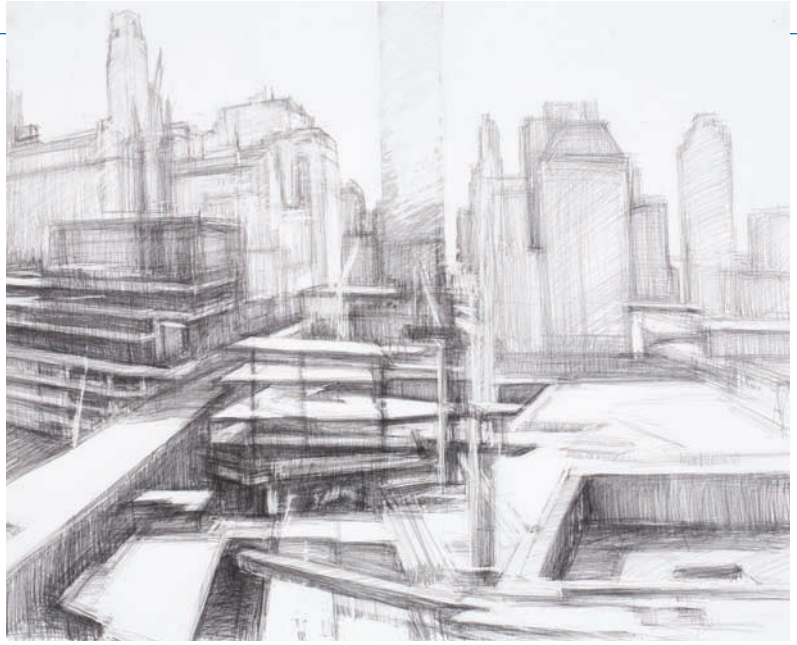
TOP LEFT: ***From Trudy's*** (oil, 10x10)

TOP RIGHT: ***Southeast Towards Red Hook*** (oil, 16x16)

"Don't get fixated on making a good painting. You can't be afraid of making bad paintings if you're going to learn." Diana Horowitz

RIGHT: ***WTC Construction From the 10th Floor*** (graphite, 19x24)

BELOW, RIGHT: ***Pylons and Bayonne*** (oil, 6x11¾)



Materials

Customary palette: Winsor & Newton oils—titanium white ("the most powerful and opaque white"), not zinc white ("which is more silvery"), cerulean blue, cobalt blue, French ultramarine, Naples yellow, cadmium yellow pale, cadmium yellow, cadmium orange, cadmium scarlet, cadmium red deep, cobalt violet, burnt sienna, blue black, oxide of chromium (green)

Occasional colors (usually in summer): Winsor & Newton oils—permanent green, yellow ochre, alizarin crimson, cadmium red, Winsor violet (dioxazine)

Easels: full-sized **Jullian** French easel, **Stanrite** 100 lightweight aluminum easel ("great for larger canvases")

Brushes: Silver Brush Grand Prix extra-long filberts (bristles), **Winsor & Newton** Monarch filberts and rounds (synthetics), **Italian Art Store** Series 2410 flat brush sets (kolinsky sables)

Other: brown wooden palette; old **Maclaren** umbrella stroller ("to cart stuff around")

behind her, who advised, "Don't touch it. Just leave it as it is." It was the actor Katharine Hepburn, and Horowitz took her advice.

Over her career, Horowitz has traveled across the country and to various parts of Europe to paint. She spent two years teaching at the Art Institute of Chicago and four in Italy as an art student and painting instructor in Rome and Umbria. Though she has intermittently painted still lifes, abstracts and figurative art, she always returns to landscapes and cityscapes, which she paints *en plein air*. "I love the city, I love the buildings—so I document the city," she says.

Horowitz first began painting at the World Trade Center in the mid 1980s when she was looking for a place to work out of the cold weather. "When I was younger, I painted outside in weather as cold as 10 degrees below zero," she says, "but those days are long gone. It wasn't a very productive way to work."

Essential Style

Being a plein air painter makes creating large paintings difficult for practical reasons, but having access (as a guest of Silverstein Properties) to the entire 48th floor at 7 World Trade Center—10,000 square feet of raw space—has allowed Horowitz to work on larger formats. From this "plein aerie" studio, she has been documenting the construction next door of Freedom Tower (renamed One—or 1—World Trade Center), which has been rising faster than she can record it.

Her elevated perspective at 7 World Trade Center reduces her renderings of the construction in *World Trade Center Reflecting Pools and Harbor* (page 70) to simple geometric shapes and color relationships that invite comparison to Charles Sheeler's precise, near-photographic portraits of the industrial landscape of the early 20th century, though Horowitz notes that her work is most often compared to Edward Hopper's light-filled cityscapes. Her drawings *WTC Construction From the 10th Floor* (at top) and *Ground Zero Construction, Vertical #2* (page 71) exhibit a different style—more "architectural" than abstract, she says—and cites the works of Richard Diebenkorn as an example of the latter technique. "I'm not

ABOVE: ***New Jersey from the World Trade Center*** (oil, 16x16)

PLEIN AIR EASEL TIP

"I've done a lot of painting out of my car window," says Horowitz, "using an easel that an artist friend made me that fits on the steering wheel. I use the cup holder for brushes, my palette rests on my lap, a garbage bag hangs on the door handle, and my paints lie on the passenger seat. I've been thinking that making this type of easel could be my business when I retire."

dogmatic in my approach," notes Horowitz. "I change things all the time—try new paint, new materials—but not my style."

Horowitz currently teaches painting at Brooklyn College, where she advises her students to go for quantity over quality in the beginning. "Don't get fixated on making a good painting," she says. "You can't be afraid of making bad paintings if you're going to learn." She often has her class do one-day paintings, allowing a maximum of three hours to complete them; these exercises, she says, "are so much fun!" Reflecting on her own process, Horowitz says wryly, "Most of the time it's really hard, and occasionally it goes really well. Translating a three-dimensional world to a flat surface is an impossible task." ■

JUDITH FAIRLY is a writer, artist and third-generation New Mexican who lives in Texas.

Meet Diana Horowitz

Tommy Agriodimas / Downtown Alliance

Diana Horowitz received a bachelor of fine arts degree from the State University of New York at Purchase College and a master of fine arts degree from Brooklyn College. She has taught drawing and painting at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Tyler School of Art in Rome and at Brooklyn College. Horowitz is the recipient of numerous awards including an art residency at Yaddo and the MacDowell Colony. Her work, represented by Hirschl & Adler Modern in New York City, has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions across the country since 1985 and is included in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the New-York Historical Society and the Museum of the City of New York, among others. View her website at www.dianahorowitz.com.

web EXTRA To see more of Horowitz's art, go to www.artistsnetwork.com/tamonlinetoc.