

**Annotations from the 2007 video
“April Gornik - Landscapes”
directed and produced by Paul Tschinkel**

**The video is available for purchase,
along with many other excellent artist videos,
at: ArtNewYork.org**

**“Moon Bay” (1996) features
prominently in the exhibition and commentary,
and is reproduced below in screen captures from the video.**



April Gornik interviewed in her studio in 1996, the year "Moon Bay" was painted.

I almost immediately started painting large. I've always wanted to be able to feel the paintings viscerally, experientially, physically – to have a physical relationship with them. The time I first started doing them it had a lot to do with the scale - feeling that you could go into them. Not mural size, where they would extend past your peripheral vision; and not window size where you'd be looking into them. More like the size of an adult human body, where you'd feel yourself – [the paintings] as a reflection of you in some way.

That's also why there are no people in them because I want to be able to go into them and experience them by myself. I don't want there to be an emotional mediation of a person's body language or an expression or a gesture or anything like that in the paintings.



This isn't stuff that when I first started painting landscapes I was thinking. All the things I'm saying right now are things I learned about myself having done landscapes for a while. In fact it's one of the things that differentiates them from older landscape paintings; one of the things from 19th century American Luminist paintings (to which my paintings are often referred), but they're really quite different on a lot of levels.

One [differentiation] is the unpeopled quality. For instance in Heade, Church, Bierstadt - almost anybody you can think of - you're given a person and their scale to cue you in as to how big the landscape is proportionate to you. My paintings are so much more self-conscious, more Freudian, more sexual and sensualized than that. They're more direct. They're often times more frontal. And they specifically don't give you a sense of how big you are in relationship to them. Nor are they sited in real photographic terms in such a way that you know exactly where you're standing within the picture.

I noticed when I first started painting that I often put the viewer up a little bit in relation to the site I was working with. I used to think it was because I loved to have flying dreams and I'd fly over landscapes and I'd try to paint them. But I really think it's because I want to tip the viewer into the painting. I want to force that contact with landscape as the "other." So you find yourself a little more involved than you necessarily would anticipate.

That's a very self-conscious, Freudian, 20th century kind of thing – so all these subtle little things [appear in my art].

The way I paint [is different] too because I don't make every little blade of grass – I don't go for the veracity.

For instance the water in the painting "Moon Bay" is incredibly flat and incredibly still. People have been saying to me, "it's like ice," "it's like a skin," "it's like a surface," it's this, it's that. They have a lot of metaphorical reactions, and that is not something I decide before I paint.

Working out the painting, for me, has a lot to do with feeling my way through how to make the painting generate a lot of metaphorical possibilities to people. So I build that in and where people go with it is up to them.

DeDe Young, curator Neuberger Museum of Art

(Interviewed in 2004 during the solo retrospective exhibition which travelled subsequently to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery):



They give you a place to contemplate; a place to go; a place to be in the moment with them. I think all art really can do that. They give you an invitation to spend time, because you can't take them in all at once, the way you can a photograph you totally recognize. [For example] there's the Flatiron building – I see it all the time, there is the photograph of it, it is no different than what I know. She [April Gornik] gives you something you don't exactly know. You don't quite know the place or the space. And she gives you the invitation to a dialog on many levels with painterly work that is lush and beautiful and inviting, and then sometimes she doesn't let you go very deep into it. So she gives you a way to engage, and if nothing else a way to slow down and look and think.



