

VAN DOREN
WAXTER

The New York Times

What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now

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By Will Heinrich, Martha Schwendener and John Vinler
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Want to see new art in New York this weekend? Tom Fairs has two shows, one on the Upper East Side, the other in TriBeCa. And don't miss the group show "Drawings by Sculptors" at Helena Anrather on the Bowery, and Shala Miller's photographs and sculptures at Lyles & King in Chinatown.

Newly Reviewed

UPPER EAST SIDE

Tom Fairs

Through Feb. 11. Van Doren Waxter, 23 East 73rd Street, Manhattan; 212-445-0444; vandorenwaxter.com.



Tom Fairs, "Untitled," circa 1970s, at Van Doren Waxter. via the Tom Fairs Estate and Van Doren Waxter

Tom Fairs worked in London as an art teacher, showing his own work only occasionally until his death in 2007. This month in New York, though, he's got two shows at once — one of paintings, at Van Doren Waxter, and the other of his late pencil drawings paired with crisp, black-and-white nature photographs by David Schoerner, at Kerry Schuss.

The paintings, all landscapes, date from the 1970s to the 1990s. Flat planes suffused with bilious color, they look almost like abstractions, full of scrawls and intensity. But there's always at least one rectangular little house to keep you in the workaday world, as in one green example in which a cottage and piles of hay sit beyond an open field with a disorienting horizon. They're not bad, but what they chiefly serve to establish, by force of contrast, is the genius of Fairs's drawings downtown.



A 2004 drawing by Tom Fairs of a sturdy white birch with several dark saplings around it at Kerry Schuss Gallery. via the estate of Tom Fairs and Kerry Schuss Gallery, New York

Those works, palm- or notebook-size views of bushes and trees that Fairs found in Hampstead Heath and other parks, are master classes in drawing and seeing. Consider one tightly cropped portrait of a sturdy white birch with several dark saplings around it. Its springy lines glow with vitality, but at the same time, because Fairs was so clearly content to remain the student, if not the servant, of the visual information he found in the world, the drawing glows with humility, too. The birch is a tree, of course, but also a river, moving through half a dozen moods from the drawing's bottom edge to its top. But even while capturing the scene in all its lush and spiritual particularity, Fairs was impressing the page with his own warm personality. *WILL HEINRICH*