

POSTMASTERS

October 23 – November 27, 2021
Opening Sat Oct 23, 5-8 pm

SERENA STEVENS

Clover & 4th



Serena Stevens, Bedroom Closets, 2021, 90 x 72 inches

Postmasters is pleased to announce *Clover and 4th*, the second solo exhibition of Serena Stevens's new large scale paintings.

Stevens's paintings could easily be geo-tagged. Both interiors and exteriors depict the locations around her home on the outskirts of Iowa City. Un-rushed and unpopulated, they are at once deeply personal and neutral, empty and loaded, grounded and luminous.

The trope of "paint what you know" is turning the familiar into captivating and profound, hinting at possible scenarios of uncanny domesticity that the locations can accommodate. Vacillating between experience and memory, surface and subject, these are slow paintings, made softly and hazily, where the familiar and overlooked trace the contours of a private world.

The paintings of *Clover & 4th* are not depictions of an intersection, rather a collection of places that converge. Stevens paints her immediate surroundings: scenes of everyday life or walks down the street, including those in the title. The paintings in this exhibition are paired to suggest various types of intersections, such as opposing views of a yard's barrier, as in *Fence Line* and *Firewood*, compositional divisions shared by *Open Window* and *Bedroom Closets*, the views of trees behind and in front of a particular house, as in *Afternoon Tree* and *Evening Tree*, or a diptych *Vertical Blinds*, that's been physically split.

Serena Stevens was born in 1988 in Fort Madison, Iowa. After spending six years living in Southern California, New Mexico and then New England, Stevens returned to Iowa to paint the distance between past and present and the discomfort of familiarity. Her project of self-reflection marks the changes in her own perspective after her departure from and return to her home. Her paintings index her efforts to see anew her personal and private spaces and surroundings. The tension, which arises from the nature of painting itself, resonates with Stevens's own exploration of place, presence and belonging.

In a review of Stevens previous show, Roberta Smith wrote:

"Serena Stevens's New York gallery debut, combines Midwestern plainness with a slightly forlorn reverie. Her paintings follow suit, haunting everyday, mostly domestic, people-free scenes with strangeness – largely through her attention to light, paint texture and scale. Ms. Stevens is in the process of mastering a loose, somewhat photographic realism that may reflect an admiration for the paintings of Edward Hopper and Eric Fischl.

I like as much as anyone (maybe more) the colorful, wittily stylized form of figurative painting, verging on cartoonish, that is popular right now. Refreshingly, Ms. Stevens dissents, turning to an eerie solemnity anchored in but not limited to the real and very much of the moment."

The New York Times, September 10, 2020