

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Shadow paintings. Now and again one encounters paintings that don't conform to any traditional category — they aren't landscapes, interiors or still lifes, and they can't be said to be inherently figurative or abstract.

The eight oils that New York painter Ena Swansea is showing at the Locks Gallery satisfy that description, and they do it so well that one never thinks of trying to label them.

Most are large paintings: One is nine feet square, another 7½ feet by 11. Their size grants them a presence that gives their ethereal imagery more punch than it could muster at easel scale.

Swansea's paintings, whether more or less abstract, suggest projected shadows rendered in soft, neutral colors.

They contain a number of natural references, particularly fuzzy leaves and flower heads, but they don't seem to be about nature per se. Reverie, especially the displacement of direct observation by memory, feels more appropriate.

The most radiant painting of all, *Princess Phone*, is also one of the most abstract. (Unless you have a vivid imagination, you won't find a telephone in it.) A glowing, opalescent cloud, it suggests the sun trying to cut through fog.

Princess Phone is the most demonstrative example of Swansea's ability to create shimmering internal light by layering pale colors over bright ones. But she's also able to make this process produce mystery, which is harder and more admirable.



"Fall" is one of eight oils by Ena Swansea that are being shown at the Locks Gallery on Washington Square. The works of the New York painter are difficult to categorize by subject or style, but successful in their nonconformity.

THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Sozanski, Edward. "Shadow Paintings," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. November 15, 2002.

albertz benda

515 w 26th st | new york, ny | 10001
tel 212.244.2579 | www.albertzbenda.com