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Pamela Talese: Rust Never Sleeps: Corrosion and Renewal in Maritime/Industrial New York

by CITYARTS on Oct 21, 2009 • 1:33 pm

By [John Goodrich](#)

With admirable directness, Pamela Talese's 20 paintings at Atlantic Gallery document the changing face of the overlooked byways of Brooklyn and Queens. Her small canvases, executed on location in a sprightly realist manner, affectionately tell the stories of neglected landmarks and factories—and especially the aging ships under repair at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, where she maintains a studio.

If storytelling is a key impulse behind these works, the wall labels provide considerable background. Talese is clearly intimately acquainted with her subjects, and the labels' descriptions reveal their peculiar, and often poignant, histories. It turns out that the broad-hulled ship in "The Valcogen Bow" set records for cargos of barley and soybeans. In another canvas, the artist captures the kaleidoscopic piles of color heaped at the Greenpoint Terminal Warehouse after a 2006 fire; the label discloses that these are the countless scraps of fabric once stored in the facility, which in an earlier incarnation housed what was probably the world's largest cordage factory. And the Domino Sugar Factory, hunkering under a rainy sky—who knew this was once the largest sugar refinery on earth?

At times, Talese's personal tales blend with her subjects'. Amidst the rusting hulks, an egret alights in a dry dock—"wildlife among industry!" Elsewhere the dockhands complicate the artist's task by repeatedly changing the lines tying up a tug.

Visually, the most striking images feature end-on or sidelong views of the weather-worn vessels. Subtle colors in "The Charleston" vividly convey the shadowy zone in the dry dock beneath the great, swelling hull.

As a kind of visual journal, Talese's paintings brim with a sense of engagement and enthusiasm for her motif. The artist's work may be less aggressively engaged with art trends, either contemporary or traditional; while they evince the honesty and empathy of Homer's early scenes of Civil War soldiers and British fishermen, they show rather less of his pictorial adventurousness in seizing upon a jutting mast or lowering cloud. But Talese's paintings



"The Valcogen Bow" by Pamela Talese

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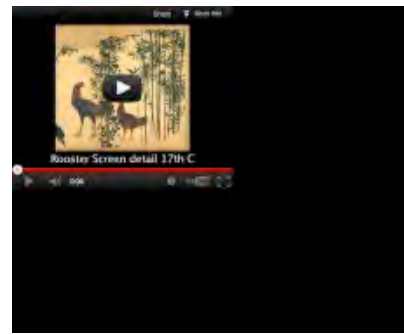
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speak amply about her devoted labor, and of the tactile pleasures of paint—qualities totally at one with the rusty nobleness of her subjects.

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Pamela Talese: Rust Never Sleeps, through Oct. 30. Atlantic Gallery, 135 W. 29th St., Suite 601 (betw. 6th & 7th Aves.), 212-219-3183.

Tags: Atlantic Gallery, gallery beat, Pamela Talese, Rust Never Sleeps, Visual Art



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