

The Evolution of Vision



Harbor 20" x 26" Casein and pastel 1947

Both of these paintings by Sam Feinstein suggest the dynamic force of nature in action. The swirling forms in "Harbor" suggest wind and waves, while the clashing colors of blues and browns show a storm coming on, or just receding. The harbor itself remains calm and light appears on the horizon. "Rocks and water" is one of several interpretations that Feinstein gave to the abstract painting that he titled "Opposing Elements." The blue forms of water swirl back and forth against the vibrant, more jagged forms of rocks, while sunlight seems to be breaking through. Perhaps even the splash of the waves can be felt. In both paintings Feinstein works with contrasting colors and dramatic forms to convey the power of nature's energy that lies beneath and beyond mere visual appearance.



"Opposing Elements" 81" x 33" Acrylic on canvas 1980s



"Pieta II" 48" x 36" Oil on canvas late 1950s

Sam Feinstein's early work showed his fascination with architectural forms, with their straight, rigorous shapes and their inherent, spatial grandeur. As a young art student in the 1930s, he created many detailed drawings of Philadelphia's architecture: clustered tenements, ordered row houses and magnificent cathedrals. With the impact of cubism emerging in his paintings during the 1940s, Feinstein worked with planes of color as he explored geometric motifs, such as this section of a pier in Gloucester. Later, in his abstract paintings, the vigor and power of architectonic forms take on a still more elemental and monumental character as he sought to convey a deeper meaning through formal relationships.



Untitled 20" x 26" Casein and pastel c1948



"Harbor" 18" x 24" Casein and pastel 1947

"Where vibrance, in nature, is created by the interaction of energies, vibrance in art is created by the darts of color impacts toward our eyes: they are direct, frontal glancings, shower-like. Head on, they jet their projections at us, each at its own speed, size and shape. Each its own force: they may twinkle, they can thud. They activate the space between the canvas surface and the viewer into fullness and fertility, so as to transform this space into a depth the canvas lacks, as an arena for the intimate mingling of the viewer's kinship with the work of art."

-- Sam Feinstein, Art For Life's Sake

Sam Feinstein worked with rich, saturated colors throughout his life. In each of these paintings, Feinstein uses small areas of hot color---reds, fuschia and orange---to accentuate and set off the larger areas of cool color---blues, green, lavender. Following his study with Hans Hofmann from 1949 to 1952, Feinstein placed these accents at the edges of the canvas in order to pull the eye outward and expand the image. Rather than an enclosing harbor, Feinstein creates an open composition that seems to suggest an underwater scene or rainforest following a trip to Cozumel in 1978.



"Cozumel I" 42.5" x 53" Acrylic on canvas 1970s