

3 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

Frank Jones's fanciful drawings; Lyles & King's inaugural exhibition in its new space; and Serena Stevens's haunting paintings.

By [Roberta Smith](#) and [Will Heinrich](#)

Sept. 10, 2020, 1:17 p.m. ET



Serena Stevens

Through Saturday. Postmasters, 54 Franklin Street, Manhattan; 212-727-3323, postmastersart.com.



Serena Stevens's 2020 painting "Rocking Chair," at Postmasters. Serena Stevens and Postmasters Gallery

"Iowa Dreams," the title of 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.

In "Rocking Chair," the subject is spare in design, made of dark wood and seen from the back. It is caught in the coffin-like shaft of light from a tall, narrow window that counters the rocker's foreshortened form with an elongated, tower-like shadow. Both are suspended in a brushy grayness that resembles mist. "Light Inside" might almost portray a disembodied vision, except it has just enough details to identify its central glow as that of a bathroom window filtered through a white shower curtain. The haunting is most palpable in the nocturnal "Intersection," in which a beam of light intersects with a traffic sign to form a kind of off-kilter cross. The scene is witnessed by an invisible stop sign whose shadow appears on a plane of gray brown that gradually defines itself as the broad trunk of a tree. The shadow is apparently cast by the traffic sign, but they don't seem to match.

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. **ROBERTA SMITH**