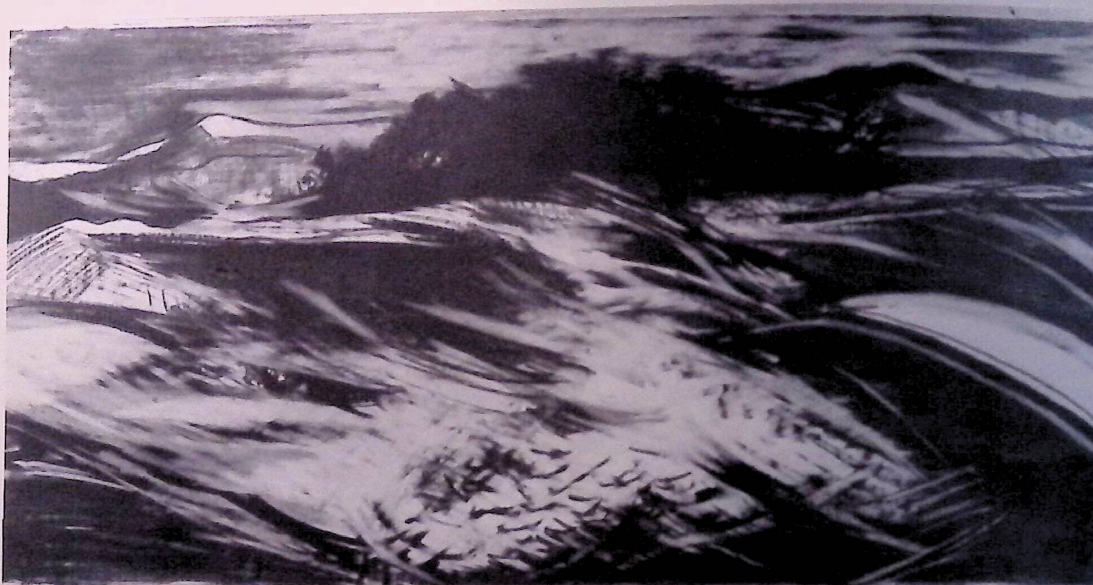


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BERENICE D'VORZON: PAINTINGS 1980-

Tick Island and Louse Point are real places. They belong to those almost primeval wildernesses of Long Island which lie a scant fifty miles from the metropolis of New York. Ticks and lice and myriad other species have resided there for eons amidst the low thickets, marshes, and surrounding sea. Pesty enough to overshadow any other impressions early travelers may have had of the terrain, the ticks and the lice gave their names to these places.

Later travelers have endured the irritations of insects in order to savor the more subtle and enduring moods of land, sea, and air to be found there. In the nineteenth century, a number of landscapists of note, such as John F. Kensett and William S. Mount, came to paint the special light and color which appealed to their Luminist sensibilities. Painters still come to Long Island to record those changing, yet changeless, phenomena. They are not so sculpturally dramatic as the rocky coasts of Maine, or so picturesquely quaint as the harbors of Massachusetts. They appeal, perhaps, to more contemplative souls who like to purloin the secrets of Nature from her somnolence or imbibe her spirits leisurely before the intoxication hits.

Berenice D'Vorzon has moved about Tick Island and Louse Point since she began summering in East Hampton in her teens, and she has drunk her share of their brew of light and color. Her work has always been inspired by landscape. The "Light Shaft" paintings she executed in the late seventies were derived from the forests around her farm in northeastern Pennsylvania.



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ART GALLERY
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n River Street
rre, Pennsylvania 18766

BERENICE D'VORZON: PAINTINGS & DRAWINGS, 1980-1982

Tick Island and Louse Point are real places. They belong to those almost primeval wildernesses of Long Island which lie a scant fifty miles from the metropolis of New York. Ticks and lice and myriad other species have resided there for eons amidst the low thickets, marshes, and surrounding sea. Pesty enough to overshadow any other impressions early travelers may have had of the terrain, the ticks and the lice gave their names to these places.

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Berenice D'Vorzon has moved about Tick Island and Louse Point since she began summering in East Hampton in her teens, and she has drunk her share of their brew of light and color. Her work has always been inspired by landscape. The "Light Shaft" paintings she executed in the late seventies were derived from the forests around her farm in northeastern Pennsylvania.

Shafts of shifting colored light interplaying with shafts of solid tree and foliage were transformed into radiant graduations of tone and color in her canvases.

The paintings she has done over the past two years have evolved during prolonged stays in East Hampton, and stand in striking contrast to the "Light Shaft" series. The coastal terrain may suggest to her a more dynamic set of shapes than did the sylvan regiments of Pennsylvania, or maybe there is simply some deeper urge to replace the almost classical order of the "Shafts" with a more baroque dynamism. The central preoccupations with radiant light and ambiguous space have not changed, but everything else has. Shapes twist and turn, expand and contract with eruptive energy. Paint flows, drips, and thrusts. Compositions seem held together by more precarious means. We are on the verge of experiencing something akin to the Action Painting of the fifties.

D'Vorzon's formative years as an artist indeed coincided with the tumult of Abstract Expressionism. But in the sixties and early seventies, it became fashionable to relegate that movement to the history books, to declare it spent, as if a decade were enough to explore its ramifications. There followed a succession of styles which were emotionally detached, compared to the naked passion of the Action group. Pop, Op, Minimal, and Photorealism all resolutely avoided romantic personalism and bravura painting techniques. Abstract Expressionism was not a "cool" style, and the sixties and seventies sought coolness.

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Moods change quickly in the modern world, and we seem to be making our way back to the "hot" manner of the Expressionists. The recent varieties of painterly primitivism, the New Imagists, and the messier, more torrid forms of pattern painting are indicative of this shift. D'Vorzon had never really drifted far from that pole anyhow. While her "Light Shaft" paintings seem rather cool in manner now, their romantic essence was always apparent. The new works renew the painterly dynamism of her early style, combining with it the complex color and tonal harmonies worked out in the intervening years. The result is a multivalent richness of surface and illusion, substance and light, active and passive movement — an orchestration of form which intensifies the landscape experience to a level of transcendence.

The most conspicuous Abstract Expressionist element in the new works are the drips, which D'Vorzon has revived without fear of being labelled a reactionary action painter. William Pellicone, writing of D'Vorzon's 1980 exhibition at the Soho Center for the Visual Arts, noted the "classical structure (she added) to the usual action drips."¹ Functionally, the passive accident of the drips plays against the willful propulsion of the impasto arcs. The drips also reassert the flatness of the picture plane against the atmospheric illusions of the brushwork. The drips are, indeed, part of a repertory of painterly gestures, along with the glazes, impastos, scumbles, and ribbons of paint drawn from the tube, all aimed at representing the dynamics of nature through a distinctive and personal vision. Tempos overlap, and muted expanses are invaded by shots of color which ferry the eye across "seas" and along "shorelines."

The drips have become less important since their initial appearance, however, as D'Vorzon has turned to explore other forms in the repertory, such as the slashing arcs (e.g. "Louse Point Violet"). The "air and sea" pictures of 1980 and early 1981, with their distant horizons, began to give way in the middle of 1981 to pictures containing definite foreground elements, as in "Night Tracer (Tick Island)." Surging organic shapes have come to dominate the latest pictures, notably the "Acabonac Air" series.

D'Vorzon rightfully does not consider herself a flatout Expressionist. There is unquestionably a powerful emotional energy coursing through her work, but it remains intimately attached to the landscape itself. In fact, most of the paintings and drawings closely resemble the essential patterns and tonalities of specific places and phenomena. Their representationalism is surprisingly clear when compared with photographs of the sites.² As Helen Harrison observed in a recent reference to D'Vorzon's work in *The New York Times*, "the illusion of landscape and the reality of the painted surface alternate in the viewer's consciousness."³ Lush pigment and strong design allow these paintings to stand alone as abstractions, while clear echos of natural space and light grant them illusionism.

Rather like the Cubists, D'Vorzon has fashioned a surface which is simultaneously flat and three-dimensional. This is a difficult ambiguity to maintain, this retaining of the rich tactility and rhythmic patterning of surface, while at the same time flirting with a void aglow with colored light, or with a shape that begins to penetrate into the canvas and assume mass. In another review of D'Vorzon's work last

December, Phyllis Braff described her search for a method

*"to describe a three-dimensional spatial sensation without renaissance perspective illusions, by taking painterly elements that could suggest the sense of changing light, density, and mutations of vibrant, sensuous experience, and using them in new arbitrary ways to invent the essence of a scene. It is a vocabulary of nature's signs reduced to the language of pigment. Color is alternately solid and fluid as it gestures, drips, moves, or is contained within bold shapes composed of abstract strokes."*⁴

The most recent paintings, such as the "Acabonac Air" pictures, reveal clearer perspectives of the landscape. D'Vorzon's interest in the dynamics of pictorial space has, in fact, led her to the use of raking aerial views, akin to late medieval landscapes, which reveal both the perspective of the topography and its surface patterns.

Even more than space, light inspires D'Vorzon. An immense, carefully orchestrated range of tonalities pervades her work, paintings and drawings alike. Light radiates from her surfaces in ways often more suggestive of bravura quasi-Impressionists, such as Manet or Sargent, than of the Abstract Expressionists. In many of the works, her sensibilities seem to run even closer to those of the great Romantic landscapist, Turner, whose frothy evocations of mist-laden air and churning sea reached new heights of evocative sublimity.

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1. William F. Look, "in
2. Compare photogra
3. Helen A. and Real January
4. Phyllis B. December

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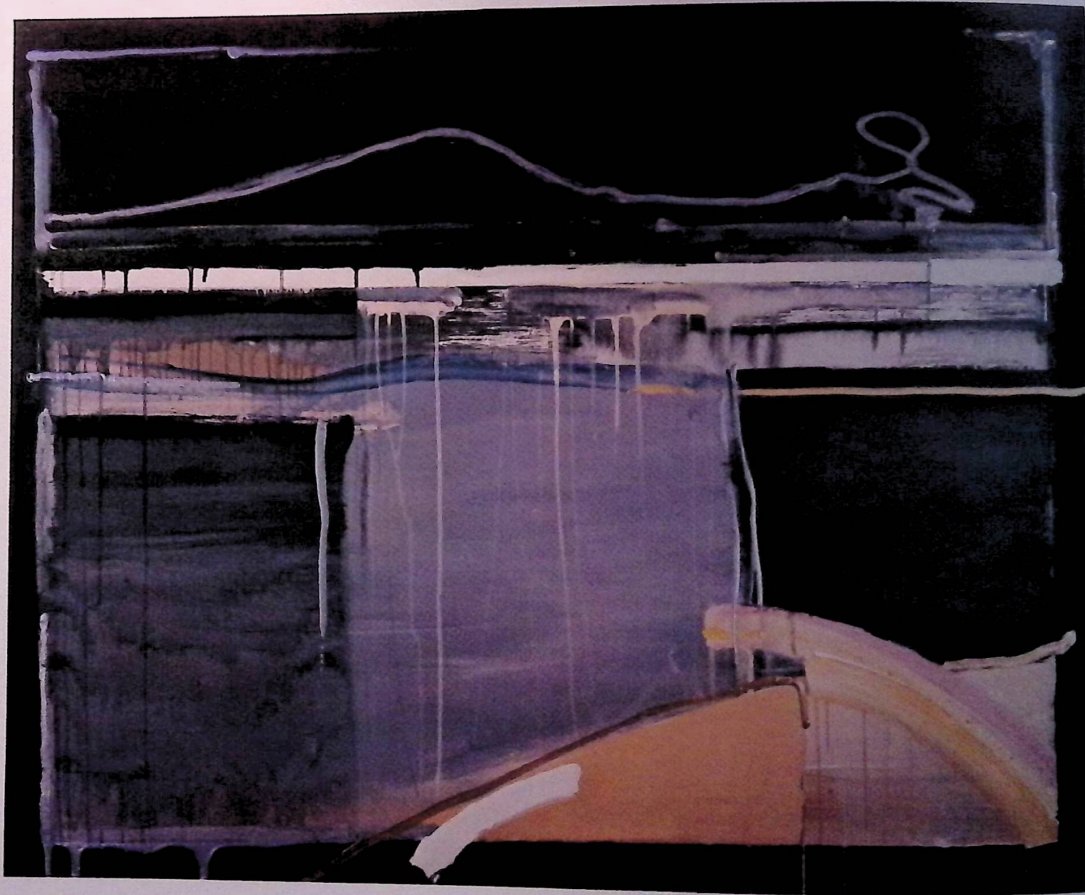
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Like these nineteenth century counterparts, D'Vorzon provides us with an almost palpable immersion in nature. Hers are not abstract permutations worked out remote from their inspiration. They are vivid condensations of specific phenomena — storms over the sea, sunsets, glimmering ponds, tangled thickets — seen, felt, and pushed through into paint, to bring us into some moment of rapture which the artist felt in nature's presence. There is something like a vision of Genesis in these paintings. Light emerges out of darkness upon a primeval world of half-generated forms. The energy is nascent and unbridled, but it has been coerced by a controlling will into meaningful pictorial drama.

William H. Sterling
Director

Notes

1. William Pellicone, "Tradition With the Forward Look," in *Artspeak*, May 22, 1980.
2. Compare "Acabonac Air-Entrance" with the photograph of Louse Point.
3. Helen A. Harrison, "49 Artists Capture the Illusions and Realities of Winter," in *The New York Times*, January 3, 1982.
4. Phyllis Braff, review in *The East Hampton Star*, December 3, 1981.



no. 9





no. 9



no. 1

PERSONAL HISTORY:

Born: New York City
BFA: Cranbrook Academy of Art (1954)
MA: Columbia University (1968)
Assoc. Prof. — Printmaking & Painting, Wilkes College, Pa.
(since 1969)

EXHIBITIONS:

Sordani Gallery, Wilkes College, Pa. (1982)
Loft Gallery, Southampton, N.Y. (1981) (3 person)
"Illusions of Space," First Women's Bank, N.Y. (1981)
(4 person)
Soho Center for Visual Artists, N.Y.C. (1980) (2 person)
Benson Gallery, Bridgehampton, N.Y. (1976)
Everhart Museum, Pa. (1975) (2 person)
Keystone College, Pa. (1972)
Brata Gallery, N.Y.C. (1957, '59, '62)

GALLERY GROUPS:

Marion Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, Pa. (1981, '82)
Barbara Gillman Gallery, Miami, Fla. (1981, '82)
Loft Gallery, Southampton, N.Y., "Collage" (1981)
Benson Gallery, N.Y. (1980)
Ianzuzzi Gallery, Scottsdale, Az. (1978-79)
N.E. Pennsylvania Invitational Traveling Exhibition
(1978, '81)
Soho Co-op Galleries, N.Y.C. — 10th Street Artists (1978)
Lehigh University — Pennsylvania Printmakers Bicentennial
Invitational (1976)
Spoleto, Italy — Plinio il Giovane (1973); Rome, Italy —
Primo Piano (1972)
Chicago — Robert Paul Gallery (1971); Detroit —
Rubiner Gallery (1971-72)
Paris, France — Creuze (1965); Mexico City — Proteo (1960)
New York — Brata, Camino, Tanager, Nonegon, Phoenix,
Artists, etc. (1958-68)

MUSEUM GROUPS:

Aldrich Museum, Conn., "New Acquisitions" (1981)
Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, N.Y., "Winterscape"
(1981)
Allentown Museum (1976); Artists of the Springs,
Aswagh Hall (1976-80)
Roberson Museum, N.Y. (1975); Spoleto Festival (1973);
Vienna Print Biennale (1972)
Everhart Museum, Pa. (1968, '70, '77); Guild Hall,
East Hampton (1967, '69, '70, '72, '81)
Tokyo Museum of Modern Art (1960); Whitney Museum and
Library of Congress (1957)

AWARDS:

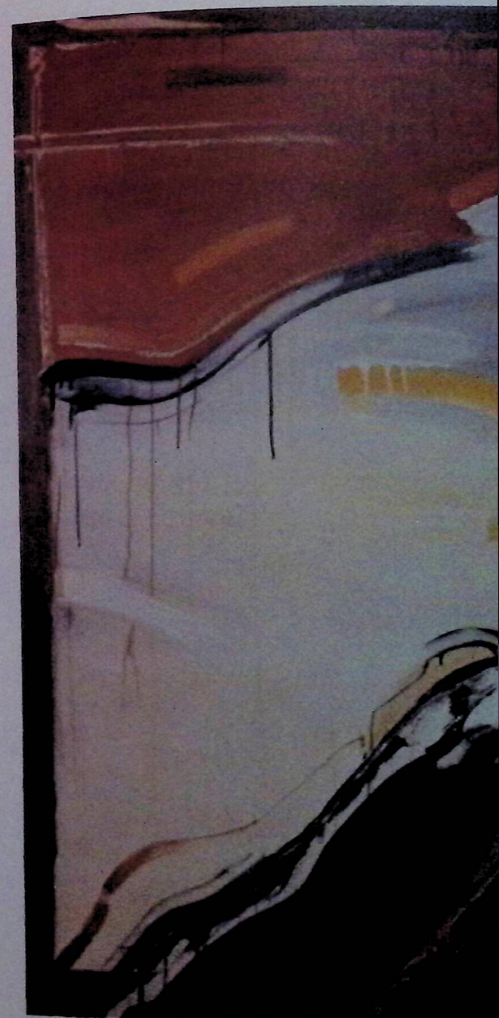
"Best Abstract Painting in Show," Guild Hall Museum Annual
(1981)
Purchase Award — Everhart Museum (1976)
Juror's Award — Roberson Museum (1975)
Award Exhibition — City Center, N.Y.C. (1955)

COMMISSIONS:

Curator: OIA sponsored travelling print show, "Artists Who
Make Prints" (1980-81)
Cover for N.E. Pennsylvania Philharmonic 1976-77 season
program
Mural (4 x 32 ft.), Community Medical Center Hospital, Pa.
(1977)
Mural (9 x 50 ft.), Percy Brown, Allentown, Pa. (1971)

COLLECTIONS:

Everhart Museum, Pa.; Aldrich Museum, Conn.; Library of
Congress; Oppenheimer Co.; Best Corp.; General
Instrument; Ivan Chermayeff (APC); Southampton Hospital;
Bank of New York, Miami; Wyoming National Bank, Dallas
and Kingston, Pa.; and many private Collections.



OCIPS:

m, Conn., "New Acquisitions" (1981)
eum, East Hampton, N.Y., "Winterscape"

eum (1976); Artists of the Springs,
(1976-80)
eum, N.Y. (1975); Spoleto Festival (1973);
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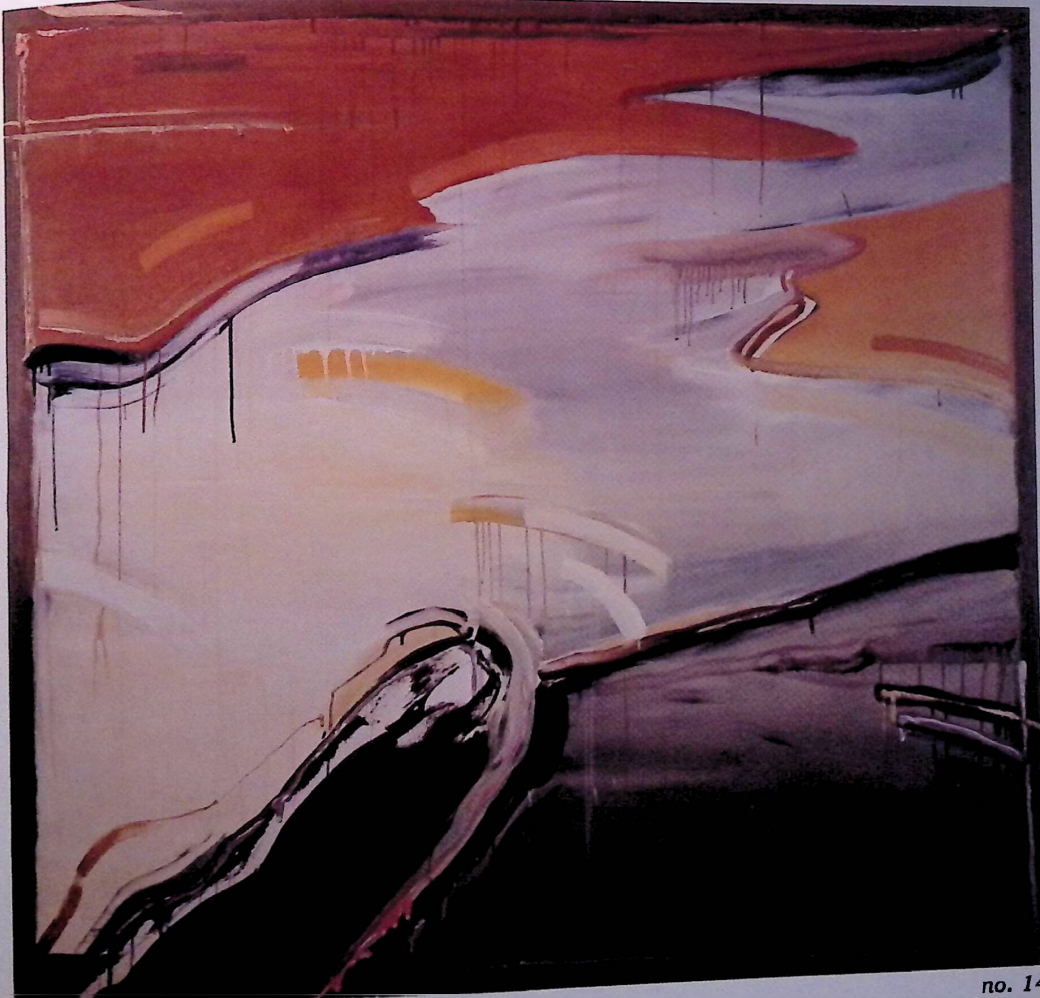
Painting in Show," Guild Hall Museum Annual

d — Everhart Museum (1976)
— Roberson Museum (1975)
on — City Center, N.Y.C. (1955)

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ponsored travelling print show, "Artists Who
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Pennsylvania Philharmonic 1976-77 season

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no. 14



no. 12



no. 16



no. 17



Louse Point (photograph)

1. Cache-Cache
2. Low Horizon
3. Water 1980.
4. Fall Silver 19
5. Louse Point
6. Louse Point
7. Hot Night on
8. Water Tracer
9. Night Tracer
10. E H Sassafr
11. E H Sassafr
12. Fresh Pond-V
13. Acabonac Ai
14. Acabonac Ai
15. Tick Island S
16. Fresh Pond-V
17. E H Sassafr



no. 12



no. 16



no. 17



Louse Point (photograph)

LIST OF WORKS

1. *Cache-Cache* 1980, acrylic on canvas, 60" x 68"
2. *Low Horizon Melt* 1980, acrylic on paper, 39" x 28"
3. *Water* 1980, acrylic on paper, 39" x 28"
4. *Fall Silver* 1980-81, acrylic on canvas, 68" x 60"
5. *Louse Point Pink* 1981, acrylic on canvas, 36" x 34"
6. *Louse Point Violet* 1981, acrylic on canvas, 50" x 40"
7. *Hot Night on Tick Island* 1981, acrylic on canvas, 40" x 30"
8. *Water Tracer* 1981, acrylic on canvas, 54" x 60"
9. *Night Tracer* (Tick Island) 1981, acrylic on canvas, 40" x 50"
10. *E H Sassafras-Dancer* 1981, acrylic on canvas, 54" x 60"
11. *E H Sassafras-Interlock* 1981, acrylic on paper, 21" x 28"
12. *Fresh Pond-Wind* 1981, acrylic on canvas, 60" x 68"
13. *Acabonac Air-Entrance* 1982, acrylic on canvas, 68" x 84"
14. *Acabonac Air-Landing* 1982, acrylic on canvas, 68" x 72"
15. *Tick Island Storm* 1981, graphite on paper, 27" x 41"
16. *Fresh Pond-Wind* 1981, graphite on paper, 27" x 41"
17. *E H Sassafras-Dark* 1981, graphite on paper, 27" x 41"

BERENICE D'VORZON

Paintings

and

Drawings

1980-1982

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