

TIBOR DE NAGY

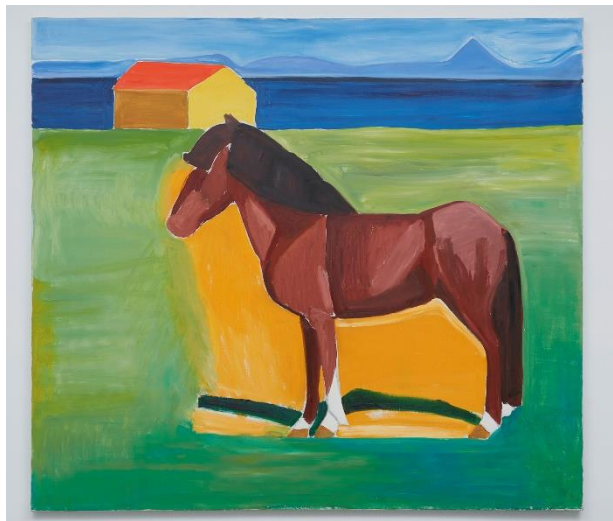
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The New York Times

LOWER EAST SIDE

Louisa Matthiasdottir

Through March 10. Tibor de Nagy, 11 Rivington Street, Manhattan; 212-262-5050; tibordenagy.com.



Louisa Matthiasdottir's "Dark Horse, Yellow House, Red Roof I," circa 1987-89, in the show "Hestar — Paintings in Iceland." Estate of Louisa Matthiasdottir; Alan Wiener

Born in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1917, Louisa Matthiasdottir came to New York in 1942 and stayed, either in the city or upstate, until [her death in 2000](#). Like her husband, Leland Bell, and other artists of their coterie, Matthiasdottir was a figurative painter, but one for whom the figure was as much a pretext for arranging blocks of color as an end in itself.

In "Hestar — Paintings in Iceland," a strange and wonderful show at Tibor de Nagy, those color blocks are devoted to the stocky little horses ("hestar") introduced to her native country by Nordic settlers. Rendered mostly in silhouette, without eyes, against glowing green heath and blue stripes of ocean and sky, these repeating figures might make you think of more recent conceptual painters like Ann Craven or Josh Smith. But Matthiasdottir's compositions aren't as simple as they look. A horse in a green field, with its bulky torso and narrow legs, is actually the perfect means of exploring the way solid objects distort our perception of their backgrounds. In "Black Horse With Pink Shirted Rider," the animal's feet are all level but the ground seems to rise, and change color, under its belly. The chestnut-colored equine in the glorious "Dark Horse, Yellow House, Red Roof I," meanwhile, sheds golden light like an electric lamp. *WILL HEINRICH*

