

TIBOR ^{DE} NAGY

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Louisa Matthíasdóttir

Hestar

Paintings in Iceland

Opens Saturday, January 29, 2022

January 29 to March 10, 2022



Louisa Matthíasdóttir *Brown Horse with White Feet* c. 1987-88 oil on canvas 22 x 28 inches

Tibor de Nagy Gallery is pleased to present Louisa Matthíasdóttir's *Hestar*, an exhibition of paintings of landscapes and horses from the 1980s. This is the artist's sixth show at the gallery.

Louisa Matthíasdóttir's colorful, unassuming and minimal landscape paintings, have the striking quality of appearing constructed. She said of her process, "The reason I paint is because I want to paint what I see. But to paint what I see, I must build from color." From the 1970's and into the 1990's, Matthiasdottir regularly painted the Icelandic landscape. These works are painted in broad flat planes of intense color with tilting green meadows,

distant treeless mountains under stark skies. Often they are punctuated by dark horses or dogs, blocky buildings and clusters of sheep. They are always elegantly composed. The result is a sort of marriage of abstraction with the Nordic landscape and its inhabitants.

Matthíasdóttir was often described as having a sensibility reflecting the island nation she came from. The title of the exhibition is *Hestar*, the Icelandic word for horses. All horses in Iceland come from the original ones brought by Norse settlers a millennium ago – they are stocky, hardy, and used for shepherding, transportation and racing. Due to their centuries of isolation, they are genetically unique.

Louisa Matthíasdóttir (1917-2000) was born in Reykjavík. She first studied art in Copenhagen and later in Paris and became a prominent younger member of Iceland's first avant-garde. In 1942 she moved to New York where she met her husband, the painter Leland Bell and attended Hans Hofmann's school. With her husband and a group of fellow former Hofmann students, including Robert de Niro, Larry Rivers, Nell Blaine, and Jane Freilicher, she helped to foster a new relevance for representational painting.

Matthíasdóttir's first New York gallery exhibition was in 1948 at the Jane Street Gallery, the original artists cooperative. From the 1960s through the 1980s, she exhibited regularly at the Robert Schoelkopf Gallery in New York as well as throughout the US and Europe. Her paintings are included in many private and public collections, including the Tate Gallery, London, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. A retrospective was held at the Scandinavia House in New York in 2004 which then traveled to Iceland and several European countries. In 2017, a centenary exhibition was held at the Reykjavík Art Museum.