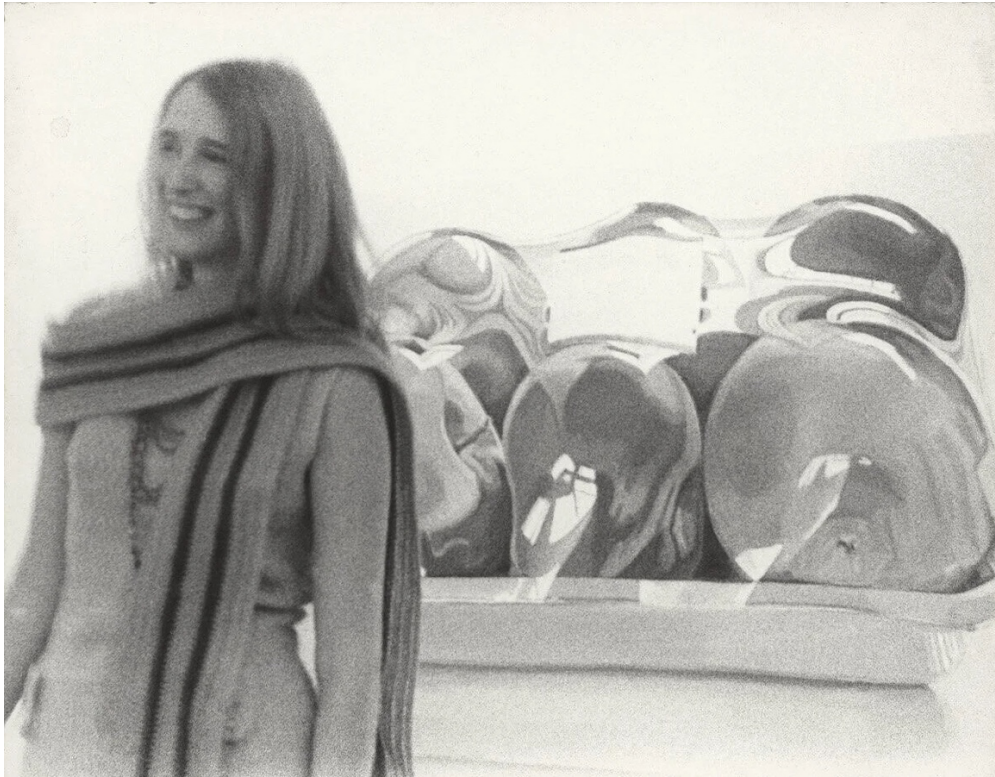


DC Moore Gallery is profoundly saddened to announce that celebrated painter and longtime friend Janet Fish (1938-2025) passed away on December 11 at her home in Vermont.



Janet Fish, 1968

Janet Fish invigorated painting with an expansive body of work that revels in the perception of light's behavior. Throughout her career, she pushed the formal and conceptual possibilities of still life, depicting surprising combinations of objects seen in changing lights. Dubbed a "visionary of the real" by art critic Gerrit Henry, Fish alchemized commonplace objects into radiant compositions.

Fish's innovative career began in the late 1960s, when she set herself the challenge of capturing the interaction of light with glass and plastic. As her still life paintings developed into even more complex and vibrant compositions, the effects of light and color remained central to her practice. Fish regarded light as a life force that moved through all beings, animate and inanimate, and her paintings reflect this philosophy. "I see light as energy," Fish said, "and energy is always moving through us. I don't see things as being separated—I don't paint the objects I paint one after the other. I paint through the painting."



Painted Water Glasses, 1974. Oil on canvas, 54 ¼ x 60 inches. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from Susan and David Workman

Janet Fish was born on May 18, 1938, in Boston, Massachusetts. From the age of ten, she grew up in Bermuda, to which she attributed her lifelong fascination with bright light and color. Her family also instilled her with an interest in art— her mother, Florence Whistler Fish, was a sculptor and potter and her grandfather, Clark Voorhees, was an American Impressionist painter.

After receiving her B.A. from Smith College, Fish enrolled in the Yale School of Art, where she studied alongside Chuck Close, Rackstraw Downes, Nancy Graves, Brice Marden, Robert Mangold, Sylvia Plimack Mangold, and Richard Serra. At Yale, Abstract Expressionism was the dominant school of painting and Fish grew increasingly dissatisfied with the style. During a summer at the Skowhegan Art School in 1962, Fish was encouraged by instructor Alex Katz to paint landscape, which proved to be a breakthrough in her artistic practice.

After graduating from Yale University with an MFA in 1963, Fish moved to New York City, where her painting progressed in dialogue with that of her Pop Art, Minimalist, and New Realist contemporaries while remaining resolutely fixed on her immediate surroundings. She began painting mundane objects in her studio and became drawn to packaged products, such as plastic-wrapped fruit from the supermarket, jars of honey, and tequila or Windex bottles. On increasingly large canvases, she focused on these the way light would travel through and animate these translucent and reflective objects. Fish insisted that subject matter was unimportant, for her work was not about narrative but the complex relationships of color, light, and form.

While meticulous in detail, Fish was not interested in representing a precise moment. Her compositions were carefully considered accumulations, often rearranged over the course of days. As Fish explained: “The painting is not a snapshot. It’s more of a record of the things that happened visually over the month that I was working on the painting. I like to catch things in their best possible aspect.”

Fish’s work from the late 1960s and 1970s earned her a place at the forefront of a growing number of artists working within the parameters of realism. Characterized as “new realism” or “super realism,” Fish was included in a number of group exhibitions organized around the theme. Fish stood out, however, in that her approach to the “real” was inextricable from the artifice of painting. Linda Nochlin, in her 1974 essay “Some Women Realists,” referred to Fish as a “pictorial phenomenologist,” interested in “direct visual experience, not evocation.”



Red Cups and Tulips, 1981. Oil on canvas, 36 x 82 inches.

Despite being categorized as a “realist” painter, aspects of her painting resonated with other parallel movements in American Art. She developed a completely personal painting style which was in dialogue with the major concerns of postwar American art. Her arrangements of mass-produced items have something in common with the deadpan sensibility of Pop arts. She used the serial forms of the plastic and glass containers to create grid compositions, paralleling concerns of Minimalism. And her energetic brushstrokes and all-over painting style recalled lessons in Abstract Expressionism.

Throughout the 1970s, her compositions grew increasingly complex as Fish set new challenges for herself. She began painting arrangements of glasses of water placed on mirrors and later, including reflections of the outside world seen through the objects. In the late 1970s, Fish moved to a sixth-floor loft in Soho. She began creating paintings of glass objects in front of a window, for the first time bringing in elements of an outside world and placing them in relation to the still life. At the same time, she began bringing in non-transparent objects— flowers, fruit, sets of colored glassware. Still working with a layering of movements of light, she played with reflections of landscape or streetscape, colors reflected through objects, and the movement of color across the canvas. As Fish explained, “I was beginning to work on revolving compositions—your eye goes to one end of the picture then revolves back through the painting in another way.”

In 1979, she met artist Charles Parness, who was her partner for the rest of her life. Fish and Parness began splitting their time between New York and Vermont. The move to Vermont had a profound impact on Fish’s painting, as the landscape came to feature more prominently in her compositions. She also began including human figures in her paintings for the first time— depicting her friends, family, and neighbors at events such as birthdays, lawn sales, and other events. Often working in a long horizontal format, Fish presented increasingly complex visions of material abundance with wit and delight.

While these paintings took a wider perspective compared to her earlier work, there were often still life elements foregrounded in the composition. In her portraits, she would surround the figure with objects she associated with them. The objects in her paintings often came from her own collection, but she also frequently borrowed items from her friends and neighbors. Fish created several compositions of collections of objects from friends, becoming portraits in a different respect. While she explored subject matter, Fish still allowed light and color to carry the energy and movement within her artwork, creating an interrelated environment of forms. Fish continued to explore this expanded point of view until, because of physical limitations, she ceased painting in 2009.

Janet Fish has been represented by DC Moore Gallery since 1995. Her work is included in numerous museum collections, including the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Brooklyn Museum, NY;

Buffalo AKG Art Museum, NY; Cleveland Museum of Art, OH; Dallas Museum of Art, TX; Detroit Institute of Arts, MI; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Museum of Fine Arts, MA; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, PA; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; and Yale University Art Gallery, CT.



Bird's Nest, Apple Blossoms, 2004. Oil on canvas, 56 x 50 inches

For more information and a visual archive of Janet Fish's work, please visit dcmooregallery.com and janetfish.net.

For images, please contact Caroline Magavern at cmagavern@dcmooregallery.com.