

Wendy Artin  
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Wendy Artin's sepia watercolors of the human figure and the Roman landscape attain such a liquid purity of form that it is as if they flow from some artist's philosopher's stone. She transmutes solid flesh and stone into a heady, molten ambrosia. She has the talent to make the most difficult of exploits look easy - a few brushstrokes, sharp here, soft there, a spot of darkness, a blur of paleness, and voila, a sculpted body bathed in light emerges from the page, an ancient aqueduct winks brightly by a stand of pines.

Besides her mastery of technique, Artin displays an adventuresome playfulness within classical confines. Her subjects - the naked human figure, antique Rome - are timeless. The figures stand alone, with backgrounds only if necessary to define a contour, and shadows only to give a body weight.

Often they resemble drawings by Renaissance masters. But the poses are energetic, sometimes even off-balance, and she executes them rapidly, sometimes in under a minute, giving them a vigorous immediacy. The landscapes include only trees and buildings. Some have the precise details, down to individual bricks, tiles, and lattices, of a Canetti, while others bathe in impressionistic waviness.

But she always picks out the precise touches of light and shadow that convey the whole, while paying attention to the subtlety of middle tones that gives texture to the surfaces. It feels as if you could step into the scenes - and find yourself in an airy, golden space.

Noemi Giszpenc