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Cynthia Knott

Paintings of the Sea

DC Moore Gallery

724 Fifth Avenue, between 56th and
57th Streets

Through Aug. 11

The sea and sky around the Hamptons on Long Island are painted so often that they could qualify as clichés. But that can't be said of Cynthia Knott's renditions. Braving the stiffest of weather, she paints directly at the seaside, recording the shiftings of light and atmosphere on surfaces she meticulously builds up with layers of gesso, metallic pigments, encaustics and oils. The results border on the symphonic, involving sky, sea, sun, clouds and horizon line without the slightest trace of land, in passages that range from serene to explosive.

The large canvas "Faithful," for example, depicts a mutable sky in which a baroque cloud thrusts up almost like a geyser from the horizon line, seeming to generate a golden haze on one side and a denser, more ominous formation on the other. Behind this turbulent array, which casts a path of shimmering light on the water beneath it, is a blue-green sky washed with white light. Far less agitated is "Promise," in which a pale blue-green scrim, touched faintly with gold and bearing the almost indiscernible trace of a rainbowlike arc, hovers over a narrow stretch of slightly darker water.

In a trio of smaller paintings, "Migration I," "Migration II" and "Red Nigh II," Ms. Knott goes for baroque (oops!) catching voluptuous cloud shapes touched with pink, rusty rose and yellow-white that suggest the luxurious, translucent shimmerings of the 18th-century artist Giovanni Battista Tiepolo. Her paintings change with the light they are viewed in, just as the atmosphere she paints changes from moment to moment. At their best, they conjure up a shivery sense of nature's possibilities.

GRACE GLUECK