

# Los Angeles Times

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The words that reflexively come to mind before Sharon Ellis' extraordinary work could use some customizing. Yes, she is a visionary but even more so a visionist, an apostle for sight, for observation as an active, acute, transformational practice.

The scenes she paints suggest the supernatural, but since they are very much rooted in this world, they might better be described as super-natural. They represent not another reality but this one — amplified and intensified.

There's ample time to muse over such fine distinctions while in thrall to her dozen recent works at Christopher Grimes Gallery. This is Ellis' first show of paintings on paper, and a difference in texture registers first of all. Instead of the deep gloss of layered alkyd on prepared canvas, the paint here soaks into the tooth of the paper and reads in places as feathery, like colored pencil. The paintings are about 12 inches by 16 inches, modest in size compared with her typical works on canvas. Though intimate, they conjure a vastness of emotional or spiritual scope independent of their scale.



Sharon Ellis, *Firefly Fugue*, alkyd on paper, 23-1/4 x 27-5/8 x 2 inches; 59 x 70 x 5 cm (framed)

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Ellis, based in Yucca Valley, taps into both the wild energy of nature and its mathematical order. In "Firefly Fugue," silhouetted reeds in ecstatic dance frame an efflorescence of luminous sparks. The two halves of the painting closely mirror each other, a lattice of harmonious symmetry, while the whole buzzes in unfettered, electric lime.

Ellis channels Agnes Pelton in the softer heat of "Endless Summer," and throughout, her articulation of earthly rhythms and reverberations echoes Charles Burchfield. Caspar David Friedrich is another of her aesthetic mentors, as is William Blake. Ellis, like them, operates from a state of wonder, from the radiant place where nature, self and spirit converge. Her work calls for a new term uniting the visual and visceral.

*Christopher Grimes Gallery, 916 Colorado Blvd., Santa Monica. Through Jan. 7; closed Sundays and Mondays. (310) 587-3373, [www.cgrimes.com](http://www.cgrimes.com)*



Sharon Ellis, *Endless Summer*, alkyd on paper, 27-5/8 x 23-1/4 x 2 inches; 70 x 59 x 5 cm (framed)