

Artist Statement - Sonya Sklaroff
Cityscapes and Water Tower Paintings

I have always been intrigued with the water towers that sit high upon the rooftops of buildings in New York City. I can't help but stare up at them and notice their statuesque beauty and serenity as I walk down the street. Some people do not even seem to notice these wooden structures or many often take them for granted, for they may feel that these water towers are merely another mundane aspect of this giant industrial city. But for me, the towers are the epitome of New York City.

New York's urban landscape is my main source of inspiration. Many of my paintings are created during dusk or at night, often with the dark architecture silhouetted against the bright evening or late afternoon sky. Some are monochromatic, using a hint of color to depict a somber mood. I often paint a large amount of sky that is contrasted with the small rooftops and water towers painted in the lower half of the painting.

I usually use a limited palette to recreate the urban experience. Although to some, the city streets and rooftops may seem to be lacking in natural or vibrant color, within the drab tar streets, ironclad fire escapes, and old wood water towers, color can surprise the viewer. Sun light may strike brown colored cement building, catching the observer off guard with its intense rust and warm golden hues. The red light of a street's "don't walk" sign illuminates out from the evening light. The reflections of a car's orange, red and yellow brake lights on a wet street on a gray rainy day intensely reflects onto the ground in the puddles of water. These certain surprises of color are what I look for when I try to visually recreate my experience in the city.

By painting these dynamic compositions, often using limited colors and highly contrasting darks and lights, a strange emotional quality is created. It is sometimes a haunting feature that is apparent, and often a sense of loneliness or isolation is pervasive in a painting. Perhaps this is due to the lack of explicit human presence, suggesting that the city or a house itself may possess human-like characteristics. Or it may be the partially hidden darkened subjects in the foreground obscured by the lack of light during the evening hours, that remain unidentifiable to the viewer. The mystery and drama that are created by these paintings are not explicitly intended but are unavoidable, and is likely to draw the viewer into a new and strange urban world.