

JUDITH SOLOMON: IN PERSPECTIVE

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Judith Solomon's accomplished still lifes contrast order with potential chaos. Her arrangements of china and fruit, arrayed on white linens and offset by the decorative brocades of wallpaper, hint at a world both elite and conventional. Tea services symbolize an observance of public commitments and a certain generosity, but also promise exemplary behavior.

Solomon's compositions, however, and the luscious fruit she places in fragile containers, hint at repressed passions or emotional needs that proper decorum strives to tame. She gravitates to pomegranates, grapes, limes, and lemons—fruits with tart flavors and symbolic associations. She tends to choose fruit in shades of red, the colors of wine and blood.

What a contrast these warm colors strike against the chilly crystal, the delicate white china, the reflective grays of the teakettles and shimmering serving trays. To emphasize this contrast, she takes perspectives that are often skewed, exaggerated, and seen from above.



Judith Solomon, *Green Grape Parfait I*, 2008, 47 x 42", oil on canvas.

The teapot becomes a looming tower, the stacked teacups and saucers seem to teeter. Solomon crops her subjects as needed. Though she brings her work to a strong level of finish, it's clear that her underlying process is a

painterly, gestural one. She takes full advantage of the slow drying times and malleability of oils.

Even when her compositions are viewed straight on, they're never symmetrical. Her various objects have accumulated almost haphazardly, frozen in a moment between uses. In *Still*, the artist alludes to one of Boston's art treasures, *The Tea* (1879) by Mary Cassatt. Solomon focuses on the tea service itself, leaving out the young women observing the ritual in Cassatt's impressionist work. But like Cassatt, she captures not a planned event so much as a fleeting moment. Each object becomes a visual counterpart to Proust's Madeleine teacakes, opening up doorways of memory and association.

It matters little that the objects Solomon paints are her own family's heirlooms; the sentiment is familiar enough for viewers to imagine and make personal associations to their own traditions, whether recalled with nostalgia or regret.

—Shawn Hill