

Protecting Renoir: The Legacy of Helen Frankenthaler

DEC 19-JAN 20 By William Corwin, The Brooklyn Rail

“Through her long association with Frankenthaler, Wilkin realized that the artist believed that the key to protecting her own, and any relevant artist’s legacy, was understanding its origins. She worked on several exhibitions over the years, tracking Frankenthaler’s inspirations. Through these collaborations, Wilkin gained a unique insight into Frankenthaler’s drive to explain her work’s beginnings, whether these inspirations emanated from her colleagues, partners, or historical artworks. The artist also realized that influencing future generations of artists would allow her to have a continuing legacy. She was keenly interested in visiting with younger artists and advising them during the course of studio visits. One particular story seemed emblematic of Frankenthaler’s tough but humorous approach: “She was in [painter] Sandi Slone’s studio. I was with her and she spent a long time with Slone. She took Sandi’s work very, very,

seriously,” recounts Wilkin. “Sandi was using a push broom at that point, [and] as Helen was starting to leave, she looked over her shoulder and she said ‘don’t get too attached to the broom,’ which was good advice, because Helen used a million different ways of putting on paint. And then she said, ‘and you shouldn’t do floors or windows either.’”

Slone’s Response Forty Years Later:

“I took Helen and her work very, very, seriously too. Looking back years later, I’ve used every kind of tool — emphasizing touch and color with large brooms, large and small brushes, big pours, my body— painting abstract doors, windows, megaliths, mountains, rivers— exploring light, space and much more of everything. I valued her advice. Thank you Helen.”