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The Exhibition of Paintings by Stephen Sumner:
Later After – A Personal Style
By Alexander Sidorov

It is permitted of a select few, perhaps only the most exceptionally gifted creators, the luxury to be oneself at the risk of being of less interest to the majority. This, in my view, is the distinguishing feature of the paintings of Stephen Sumner, a British painter living in New York, whose exhibition is now on view. Indeed why should even a minimally sophisticated art lover, aware of the best achievements of contemporary art, be attracted to this series of paintings (or, rather, pictures) that are almost completely identical in size, composition, and subject matter? These are the pictures that can only be distinguished from one another by no more than their proprietary color series (powder blue, bubble gum pink, or misty green) and which are hard to conceptualize from the point of view of their genre or thematic classification.

What we are looking at may be landscapes, or perhaps mirages, or perhaps spectral visions. If indeed these are mirages, then these are mirages of things without borders: the “union” of earth and water, water and sky, cosmic “ups” and “downs,” “yin” and “yang.” The one thing that gives testament to their obvious virtue is the artist’s amazing ability to continuously expand the range of his monotonous cycles, without making even a single step to the left or the right, in the search for outward sources of inspiration and for a genuine revelation through his own personal imagery.

Nonetheless if you do not want to place too many intellectual and aesthetic demands on this exhibition, you may instead perceive it simply as an invitation to a private dinner arranged by a generous host for the purpose of indulging his guests with an exclusive homemade dish. In this case this show would indeed offer a few minutes of joyful relaxation from the hassles of the big city.