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# V I S I O N S O F T H E V A L L E Y



| DOWN RIVER, oil, "The River Run" series |

*J*AMIE YOUNG has been painting the Connecticut River valley since she was a teenager, and if you know how to read her colors, you can see the changes she's gone through. by EDIE CLARK

IN HER NEW STUDIO IN ASHFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS, Jamie Young stuffs slender sticks of building scrap into a makeshift woodstove: a 55-gallon drum on a tripod with a bent hinge for a latch. The pine sticks burn bright within, but it is still cold everywhere except close to the stove. This is all new. Just within the last few days, Jamie has stapled insulation between the rafters of this old tractor barn. Outside, a late spring snow covers the rolling fields that stretch beyond this farm where she and her family have recently moved.

All around her, stacked against the walls and leaning against the big work-



[ *Study for VALENTINE, pastel* ]

table, are her paintings, bold arches of color that wash across broad canvases, making river, field, marsh, forest into wide landscapes of emotion.

Largely self-taught, Jamie, who recently turned 39, has been painting the Connecticut River valley since she was a teenager. It made sense. She grew up in Longmeadow, Massachusetts, in a house that overlooked the river, and on and off since then, she has lived within sight of the river. "It's where my love for nature started," she says of the river. Her river paintings have been exhibited extensively in the valley, most notably "The River Run," a three-part series of exhibits that moved down the valley from museum to museum, each exhibit focusing on that stretch of the river. It took her three years to complete the series, scenes of the river from all perspectives — high rises in Springfield, late-afternoon silhouettes of the smokestacks in Holyoke, as well as oxbows and backwaters and the cornfields planted beside the river. When she was done, there were nearly a hundred pastels and 27 canvases.

Her pastels, tight, intimate scenes of sunlit coves (*continued on page 74*)



| ELUSIVE, oil |

*H*<sub>ER</sub>

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[ MOTHER AND MAN, *all* ]

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Artist Jamie Young with her horse named Goeth.

and backwaters, are as well received as her canvases. She used to do a pastel as a study for a larger painting. "But I found the pastels had this life to them, this spontaneity that I wasn't getting in the paintings." She wanted to start painting on-site again, instead of translating to oil in the studio. For better access, she bought

an old pickup and built a fold-down easel to fit the bed. With the truck, she could cross the cornfields and cruise the riverbanks, looking for the right spot. "Sometimes it's very hard to get what I want," she explains. Over the years she has gotten to the scene she wanted on horseback, by sailboat and canoe, and by crossing crumbling railroad trestles on foot, her paints and easel in her backpack. The truck was a great advance.

She tells now about the time she was driving along Interstate 91, heading to Springfield. "The light was just right on this pine tree, but I couldn't get to it. I tried different ways, but 91 was the only place where I could see it just like that. The (continued on page 124)

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