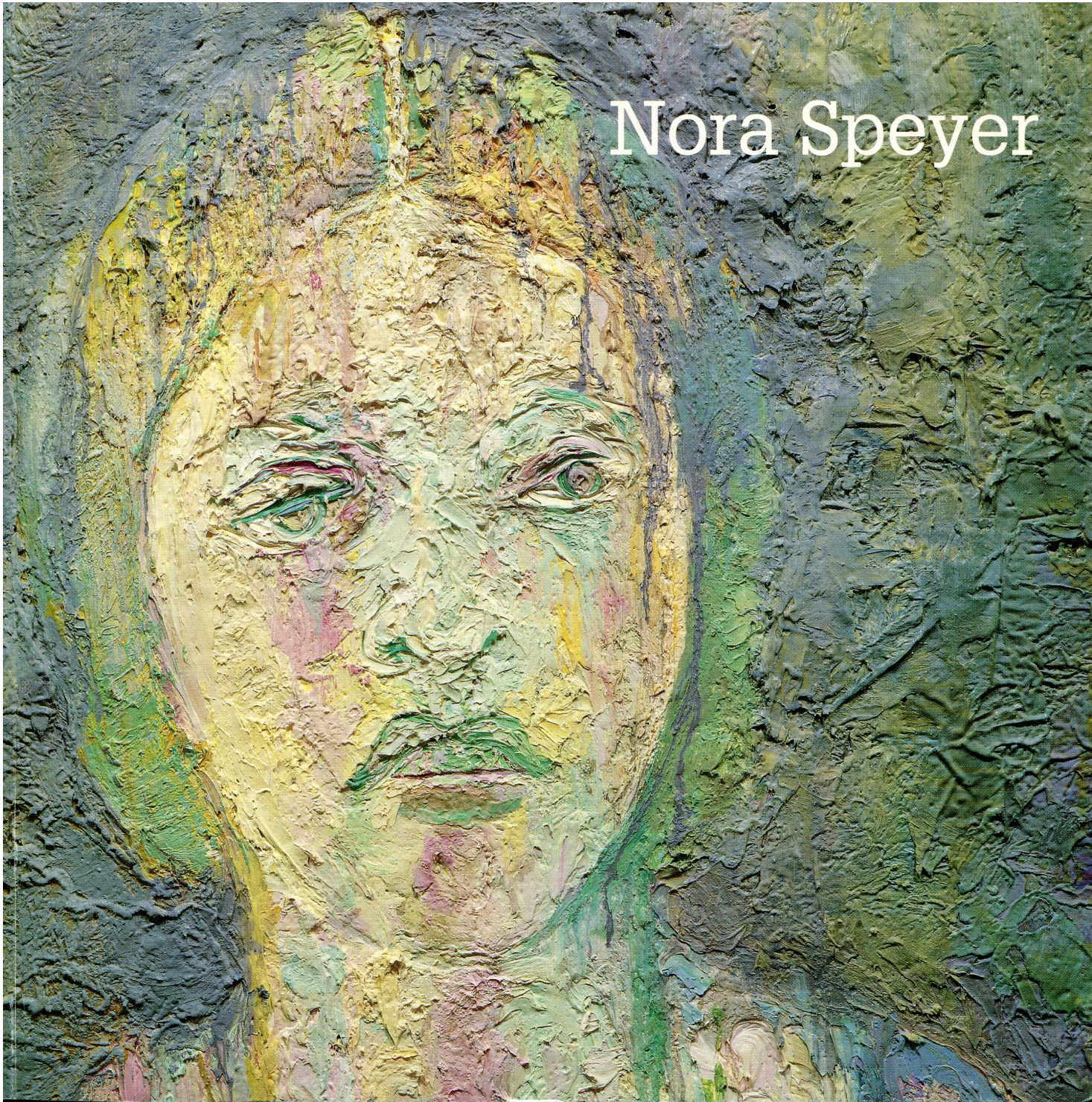


Nora Speyer





Nora Speyer materializes her emotions. She plays out the human drama on canvases laden with pigment applied with the kind of abandon that letting go of one's emotions demands. These dramas are enacted in undefined, deliberately mysterious atmospheres, neither day nor night, indoors or out.

Environments of shadow are created in which colored lights – sometimes early fluorescent green or electric blue – flickers around the edges of the forms. Figures engage in dialogues and conspiracies; they appear full of apprehension concerning their present situations, and the fateful changes that loom in their lives.

*Premonition, Adolescence, Conspirators*, – sometimes the titles state the dramatic concept behind the painting. But « sleeping », « seated », and « reclining » figures are titled generically, leaving the subject's state of mind to the imagination of the beholder. *Sleeping Figure, I*, seems at first to cuddle sensuously into a fetal position, but when you notice the way her feet seem to be in air, a potential scenario of having been thrown down and curling up in fear emerges. The action is not depicted. Only its emotional repercussions are conveyed because Speyer is not a realist, but an expressionist. She says, « emotional reality is her only interest », and among the most intense human emotions are fear, pain, anxiety, loneliness, and foreboding. In *Reclining Figure with Purple Cloth* the gauntness of the figure expresses anguish, the use of black and purple (unusual colors for Speyer) creates a strange funeral sensation, and the jarring red and blue accents intensify the psychological drama.



Except in paintings like *Seated Figure with Pillows, I and II*, where she was primarily concerned with the beauty of paint and of the human body, and in the landscapes she paints during the summers on Higgins Pond in Wellfleet, Massachusetts, Nora Speyer spends her studio time symbolizing human emotions. She will draw from the model for weeks before beginning a painting. Those sessions allow her to try out her ideas by directing the models, some of whom are actors, to act out with their bodies and in their facial expressions the particular emotional states she wants to convey. She moves them around in reality and on paper while she « sees what happens », until an all over feeling of her concept begins to materialize. This concept is never abstract ; it always emerges from her inner temperament, her life experiences, the things she feels intense about in life and in art. As she says : « In the end run your work is you ».

April Kinsley