

Matvey Levenstein



Courtesy the artist and Kasmin Gallery

Through March 2.

📍 Kasmin
297 Tenth Ave.
Chelsea

212-563-4474

[Website](#)



Can loveliness shock? Yes, as witness the fantastically skilled and sensitive neo- or para- or faux-Romantic (you decide) work of **Matvey Levenstein**, a fifty-eight-year-old Russian-American artist. The subjects of his paintings and ink drawings (at the Kasmin gallery through March 2), some on copper or wood, are forthrightly generic: landscapes from around Levenstein's home, on the North Fork of Long Island, floral still-lives, and a portrait of his wife, the painter Lisa Yuskavage, in a white bathrobe. Layered grays, orange-flavored sepia, and the odd palely simmering pink or blue constitute—or conjure, or exhale—spectral woods, clouds, a snow-covered ancient graveyard, and a storm at sea. Caspar David Friedrich comes to mind as an ancestral spirit, but the work recalls no specific precedent. Its tenor is coolly confident, assuming a viewer's empathy. That jolts. You would expect a wink or a nudge, or a smack of naïveté or perversity in so atavistic a style. But no soap. Levenstein's temerity fascinates.

— *Peter Schjeldahl*