

In the galleries: Magical images of the ordinary

By Mark Jenkins

March 10, 2023 at 6:00 a.m. EST



"Tangerines and Red Bowl" by Maggie Siner. (Maggie Siner/Calloway Fine Art)

For Maggie Siner, an unmade bed is an entire universe. The painter's "Homage to Ordinary Things," at Calloway Fine Art and Consulting, includes scenes of picturesque European towns and still lifes of fruit and vegetables, such as the pungent "Limes & Garlic Red." But Siner's exemplary subject is creased fabric, whether in the form of a rumpled tablecloth, a messy pile of pillows or clothing draped loosely on hangers. Nothing is crisp in Siner's oils, which are rendered in a style that's unbridled and seemingly improvisational, yet easily legible.

Siner was previously dean of faculty at the [Washington Studio School](#), and still maintains a home and studio in Northern Virginia. But since 2008, the artist has spent most of her time in Venice, which she loves for its "ever-changing surfaces," according to her biography.

A fine example of Siner's eye for surfaces is "Green Door," which is all white, tan and black save for a rectangular slab of vivid emerald and the fluid reflections of that color in water below. The brushstrokes are a whirlwind of eloquent smudges and slashes, suggesting that the picture was completed in a few flurried minutes. In fact, Siner's style is more considered than it appears. "Much scraping and repainting occurs," her statement notes.

The painter sometimes depicts people, mostly women, but in this show only clothing, furniture and other accessories attest to human existence. White garments — and, in one picture, four rolls of toilet paper — are rendered as landscapes of light and shadow, their brightest regions contrasted by soft blues and grays. Touches of red, including a tie, a label and a ribbon, set off the whites, but these pictures would be dynamic even without the crimson accents. All Siner needs to compose a lively picture is an expanse of wrinkled whiteness and the way light plays across it.

Maggie Siner: Homage to Ordinary Things Through March 15 at [Calloway Fine Art and Consulting](#), 1643 Wisconsin Ave. NW.