

Judith Linhares, “Rowing in Eden”

Edward Thorp Gallery, through
Sat 22 (see Chelsea)

In the radiance of Judith Linhares’s paintings, we’re reminded that *fauve* means “wild beast,” and that art offers a way to negotiate the uncontrollable. In “Rowing in Eden,” patchy and striated color resolves into glowing girls who live in an unruly, fauvist-bright world.

In *Blaze*, a young woman warms herself by the fire, gazing down at her own naked body startled, as if by a sudden sense of her own existence. French philosopher Gaston Bachelard wrote that “fire shines in paradise and burns in hell.... It is cookery and apocalypse.” The emphasis here is on paradise (that titular Eden) and cookery. An image of a serving spoon is passed from painting to painting. Three girls in *Wild Nights* toast marshmallows at a campfire so intense that its savage red,



yellow and violet brushstrokes threaten to consume the canvas.

In *Starlight*, another threesome reclines on a jewel-toned blanket, staring up at a striped and studded night sky. A glowing ball of a moon seems to have bounced off the horizon and looks about to land in the lap of the central figure, its lunar curve mirroring the arc of her body from nipple to knee.

In *Fools for Love*, four companions cavort in a tree whose branches are bluntly cut. Spring is here and the devastated limbs are sprouting again, yet Linhares camouflages the new foliage with sky: Clusters of dark-green leaves double as storm clouds. Even Eden isn’t easy, she seems to suggest, but we row on and begin again.
—Suzanne Joelson