

Windows appear regularly in the art of Christopher Pratt, often used as formal elements that spark thoughts about sight, about framing, and about how the eye (and the mind) can be contained within a picture. In many paintings, as one curator noted, “windows and doors with window panes act as thresholds or barriers between inside and outside, framing and containing the exterior landscape, but also providing visual escape from often claustrophobic interior spaces.”¹ But escape isn’t always on offer. Other windows, particularly windows depicted at night time, block our vision. “A night window is a corruption,” Pratt writes, “something that is meant to admit light and let you out becomes a reflection of your room, of what you already know.”² This denial of our expectations can be limiting, but it can also prompt self-reflection. In some works, such as *Night Window* and *Basement with Two Beds*, 1993, the space of the picture does feel claustrophobic, as if we, as viewers, are being squeezed into a constricted space; here, the windows indeed “trap the viewer inside the represented space.”³

Whether we are looking through the windows in a Pratt painting, as in *Shop on an Island*, 1969, or the reflection in a near-opaque window in *Station*, 1972, the windows define the space we are seemingly inhabiting, creating the boundaries of the painted world that the artist creates. Pratt’s work is steeped in memory, but, he says, he doesn’t remember places as rooms holding things, but as spaces: “It’s the sense of space itself, the enclosure. It became a private space . . . a lonely space.”⁴

But not all of Pratt’s windows fall into the binary of clear or opaque, nor are all distinguished by the effects of light. Some, such as those in *The Visitor*, 1977; *Girl in the Spare Room*, 1984; and *Love in Late Summer* are covered, blinds lowered to block sight, though exterior light is still illuminating each room. And as reflections can compress the space in the paintings, the closed blinds serve a similar purpose, excluding the outside world and enhancing the implied intimacy of the picture. Pratt has described his interiors as never empty, because they contain him, a “ghost” in the room. But these rooms also contain another: the houseguest whose underwear is drying on the heater, the girl in the guest room, the beloved in the bedroom, one summer day.

Love in Late Summer depicts the view from Pratt’s bed, looking down the mattress to the low footboard, across the gap to the bank of three windows on the opposite wall. It is a view Pratt has depicted before, but this painting is different because our eyes are not drawn through the windows to the landscape beyond. Rather, our gaze is halted at the blinds, contained within the intimate space of the bedroom. Despite the absence of figures, the room feels occupied, replete. “Narrative,” Pratt writes, “is most acceptable and sophisticated when it provides a suggestion that something is going on without telling you what it is.”⁵ While showing only a spare slice of bed, a featureless wall, and the slatted blinds obscuring the windows, Pratt nonetheless has created an image that tells a story, evoking both peacefulness and contentment.

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¹ Josée Drouin Brisebois, “Christopher Pratt in the Political Landscape,” *Christopher Pratt: All My Own Work* Douglas & McIntyre, 2005, p. 61.

² Christopher Pratt, *Christopher Pratt: Personal Reflections on a Life in Art*, Key Porter, 1995, p. 63.

³ Josée Drouin Brisebois, “Christopher Pratt in the Political Landscape,” p. 61.

⁴ Christopher Pratt, quoted “Life is Not a Rehearsal”, *Christopher Pratt: All My Own Work*, Douglas & McIntyre, 2005, p. 94.

⁵ Christopher Pratt, *Ordinary Things*, Breakwater Books, 2009, p. 122.