

ARTFORUM

NASHVILLE

Jodi Hays

THE BROWSING ROOM

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Philip Guston said that ghosts, including those of “teachers, friends, painters from history, [and] critics,” haunted his studio whenever he started painting. On good days, his unsolicited influences would walk out, one by one. The abstract painter Jodi Hays demonstrates a different approach to such visitations in her exhibition “Outskirts” (titled after Guston’s cityscape from 1969): Her phantoms are invited to stay.

Originally from rural Arkansas and now based in Nashville, Hays makes compositions that refer to the landscapes of her past and present by joining together disparate American fringe aesthetics. Many of the twelve works on view incorporate vintage materials that she salvaged from the home of her late grandmother. *Queen of Arkansas* (all works cited, 2019), for example, is a stitched section of a quilt stretched over a small panel. In the similarly sized *Color Fast*, a deconstructed beach ball has been made into a canvas. An adjacent piece, *Estate*, is merely a frayed segment of chair caning, revived by the artist with a swipe of light blue paint.

Hays’s artist forebears are conjured as well: In *How to Fold a Flag*, a wad of floral wallpaper is presented simply on a wall, à la Richard Tuttle. Nearby, on a tiny wooden shelf, Hays presents a collection of saved soap slivers, which nod to depression-era frugality—and, in a darker evocation, with their arrangement in a vertical cluster, to Guston’s Klansmen crowded in a car. Other items, such as the plastic paint bucket turned pedestal and the spray-painted cedar stump in the wall-spanning installation *Afternoons*, summon the assemblages of Jessica Stockholder. Across all the works on view, the real sorcery is Hays’s tempering sentimentality with a shrewd formalism—a spell for an open-ended dialogue about materials and memory.

— Emily Weiner