

ART SPIEL

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Jodi Hays – The Find at Night Gallery in LA

In Conversation with Jodi Hays and Night Gallery



Installation image courtesy of Night Gallery and Marten Elder

A new show at Night Gallery in L.A. explores feminine conventions in painting. Large cardboard assemblages counter the traditional stretched canvas by repurposing a commonplace consumerist material. *The Find* is Jodi Hays's first solo show in L.A. and a poetic contemplation on space, landscape, and material. Working in layered and dyed cardboard, Hays creates subtle landscapes reminiscent of long drives down winding roads. These works are odes to the quotidian, evoking both nostalgia and references to femininity, while straddling the line between painting and assemblage. Contributor Jac Lahav sat down with artist Jodi Hays and Night Gallery to talk about the show.

Jac: Jodi Why did you start working in cardboard?

Jodi: Perhaps the "why" is more answered in the "how." For years I invested my practice in the architecture of a painting (linen, canvas, paint, support, size). My practice was to breathe space into these structures—that of painting's history. By 2017, these interests expanded to subtle sewing or piecing of canvas and fabric, running parallel to a daily (mostly private and modest, but comprehensive) practice of works on paper. In early 2020, I dunked vintage cloth supper napkins and small boxes in bleach, aiming to extend the life of the material, or perhaps to snuff it out, but definitely to amend it. The bleach's path made parallel rivulets down the corrugation—a mark, removed, and yet, entirely made. Dye and larger sheets of material (and a bigger bath) were close behind.

Jac: How are these new works related to painting?

Jodi: One can think of painting as defined by expansive possibilities within constraints (three chords, and the truth). I see my work as a conversation on mark-making, how to expand ways to make or define a mark, by meeting fabrics or rounding out or repeating a feathered stroke (enter, the scallop). These works take up the same space, history and materials of painting, though multidisciplinary via reclaimed materials and poetry.

Judd wrote that he wanted to "disassociate my work from the bulk attitudes." It occurs to me that I might want the opposite. Like CD Wright wrote "there are so many oddly shaped ears in the field, may they never sing in unison."

Jac: Jodi Tell us more about your use of the grid?

Lahav, Jac. "In Conversation with Jodi Hays and Night Gallery," *Art Spiel*, 18 July 2022

Jodi: Painting has the ability to comment on itself, and can become many things. I enjoy this poetics of possibility. The grid is evident in the work through formal structures and also associative connections with land, material, architecture (sign posts, siding, storefronts), and history. There is agency in the found grid in textiles, in pattern and print, in the weave associated with a region (like Seersucker or Gingham), and that these found grids have been most associated with a gendered, classist, labor. That feels like the place, to start a conversation, though not an expedient one.

Jac: This is JH first show at Night Gallery. How does removing these images from the southern landscape, bringing them to LA affect the work?

Night Gallery: Jodi's paintings demonstrate how a regional vernacular can be placed in dialogue with larger traditions of art—such as postwar abstraction—to create something novel and unexpected. Though this body of work is intimately connected to the Southern landscape and visual vocabulary, I think there's a broader sense of recognition that ripples through it. These materials narrativize; they operate on the level of memory, of tactile recall, and that resonates with people regardless of whether they've been to this part of the world or not. So, it's exciting to see how these distinctive markers of the American South interact with and bolster the conceptual and formal exchanges that are taking place throughout the show, while not losing any of their aesthetic weight. *Canaan*, 76" x 52", Dyed Fabric and Cardboard on Custom Wood Strainer, 2022 (courtesy of Night Gallery and Nik Massey)

Jac: I see that Jodi's work is research-based and the titles have double meanings. What is your favorite title?

NG: Probably *Sentiminimal*. Sentimental minimalism, minimal sentimentality...you decide.

Jac: Jodi, how do you come by your titles?

Jodi: I keep lists for titles. Many of them are from this list, about 20 years strong now. Some come from Quilt Names. My rules are two fold: the title has to relate to Painting in some sense, and be personal.

Jac: Jodi, what do you hope people take away from these paintings?

Jodi: I recently purchased William Eggleston's *Los Alamos* and found this an interesting perspective from Walter Hopps: Eggleston acknowledges his belief in the aesthetic consequences of his private quest. My paintings serve as locative devices, like a map to a pocket. Akin to a map's purposes, the works are also aspirational and pointing to a place that isn't on a map. James Baldwin calls place an irrevocable condition. So, maybe I'd like people to get a sense of their own conditions, and perhaps catch a grand quest.