

## NATIVE

### Artist Spotlight: Jodi Hays

BY: Native Staff

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Jodi Hays is a Nashville painter whose work is in the permanent collections of the J. Crew Company, Tennessee State Museum, and Nashville International Airport, among others. She's had residencies with The National Parks of America, The Cooper Union School of Art, and Vermont Studio Center, and she is the former assistant director at the Cambridge Art Association (Massachusetts). In 2005, Hays relocated from Boston to East Nashville, where she helped establish the COOP Gallery. She was a professor and curator at Tennessee State University before opening Dadu, a pop-up gallery. She currently lives in East Nashville with her husband, Felix, three children (Gus, Eames, and Cleo), and polydactyl cat, Lefty. Her upcoming exhibit, *Keeper*, will show November 11 through December 3 at The Red Arrow Gallery.

"We are all migrants through time." —*Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid

My paintings extend from an interest in landscape, architecture, and language. My core iconography references grids, welcoming connections with fences, gates, boundaries, and walls.

In the work for *Keeper*, I continue to explore painting's agency as I walk throughout my neighborhood in East Nashville, seeing and observing, hunting and gathering. The painter chooses what to keep as a prompt or motive for making a painting. Moving at three miles an hour, the neighborhood is like a theatrical set, one that allows entrances and exits from one yard and boundary to the next.

I began using red ink after the 2016 election for all its reductive and associative contexts: writing and editing, broadsides, alarm signals, and blood. By living in close proximity to neighbors, we experience so much together surrounding issues of class and gentrification, racial bias, surveillance, and educational disparity. I think of these as contemporary genre/history paintings, leveraging the use of a photo/collage aesthetic, capturing a moment in time.

For years I have huddled around both the warm and rambunctious campfire of abstraction and the familiar light of representation. Either way, given the state of America at the moment, I appreciate the illumination.

— Jodi Hays