

Hazard, Elizabeth. "The Burden of Wait: Paintings from the New American South," *Fine Art Globe*, 16 January 2023.

The Burden of Wait: Paintings from the New American South

Susan Inglett Gallery presents the two-person exhibition of works offering a nuanced narrative of the American South and its continuous, endless transformation throughout time.

By Elizabeth Hazard
January 16, 2023



Jodi Hays, *Cotton*, 2022. Dye, paper, and cardboard collage 71 x 56 in. (Courtesy: Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC).

Artists Jodi Hays and Michi Meko join to display a selection of works with a shared focus on the Southern landscape in *The Burden of Wait: Paintings from the New American South*. Both Hays and Meko hail from the South and incorporate their own study and personal experiences into the selected works on views.

WHAT: Jodi Hays and Michi Meko, "The Burden of Wait: Paintings From the New American South"

WHEN: 8 DEC 2022 – 28 JAN 2023

WHERE: [Susan Inglett Gallery](#), 522 West 24th Street, New York NY

Nashville-based artist and curator Hays uses materials such as reclaimed cardboard and dyed fabrics to explore the visual lexicon of the American South. She describes her practice as "a calling upon the use of unconventional and humble materials." She notes, "I come from gardeners, teachers, believers, sinners, moon-lighting loggers, makers, milliners, cooks, healers, pharmacists, and grocers. I come from the American South, a place where the kitchen and pharmacy are in the same room. In many ways, I see my

work as that same room—an expansive space for building and coming together.” Hays expands by stating, “landscape and the material vocabulary of the American South influence my abstraction. Mining a southern *[arte] povera*, I use reclaimed textiles, fabric, and cardboard. These materials serve as stand-ins for expressive marks and resourceful labor.” Hays’ work is inspired by the material habits of artists like Robert Rauschenberg and the rituals and repetitions of Beverly Buchanan. Through the intentional use of found material, the artist visualizes the resourceful labor of women in the South. Works in the exhibit include *Cotton*, a collage of dye, paper, and cardboard; *Sweet One*, made of acrylic on stretched fabric and *Meridian*, made of dye, paper ribbon, and cardboard on panel.



Michi Meko, “In tandem with the whole existence: Never Separate,” 2022. Acrylic, aerosol, oil pastel, colored pencil, glitter, gold leaf, sequins, and fishing line on canvas 72 x 60 in. (Courtesy: Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC).

Michi Meko was born and raised in Alabama and now resides and works in Atlanta, GA. A multidisciplinary artist, he finds inspiration through his experience as a Black man alone in nature. Through various platforms, his work engages contradictions and paradoxes that he uncovers by examining his personal history, African American folk traditions, and narratives that challenge established narratives. Drawing From his own experience, Meko uses romanticized images of the American South for what he calls “metaphors for selfhood, resilience, and the sanity required in the turbulent oceans of contemporary America.” With his use of the color black as the primary medium in most of his work, the works’ landscapes impart a metaphysical aura, inviting the psyche to roam and wander. *In Tandem with the Whole Existence: Never Separate*, Meko creates a world of the sublime: awe-inspiring, beautiful, frightening, and powerful. With his use of sharp lines and bursts of color, the artist shows how the simple language of abstraction can conjure a universe of possibilities.

Hays and Meko are two very different artists, each talented and filled with depth in their own right. The strength of the exhibition lies within the strong juxtaposition between Hays’s colorful assemblages and Meko’s dark, expansive paintings.