

HESSE FLATOW

Jonathan Ryan: *Bad Lands*

April 6 – May 20, 2023

Opening reception: April 6, 6-8pm

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HESSE FLATOW is pleased to announce the opening of *Bad Lands*, an exhibition of paintings by the Los Angeles-based artist Jonathan Ryan, marking his first solo-presentation with the gallery.



Sweeping plains interspersed with jagged, pyramidal slopes and silky bodies of water delineate the painterly topographies of Jonathan Ryan's abstracted landscapes. Devoid of inhabitants, their rampant stillness and serenity conjure timelines rooted in a forsaken, archeological past while simultaneously being pulled into a hypothetical, distant future. Mankind's ongoing project of mining and occupying terrains is indirectly referenced, as the product of industrialized processes – pulverized rocks, sand, and minerals – are cemented with oil paint onto the canvas substrate, portraying textural peaks and valleys that hearken to deposit mounds of quarries in addition to naturally occurring land formations.

Ryan's use of a three-quarter, aerial view achieves a distancing that is counterbalanced by the draw of examining his granular surfaces up close. His use of acidic, unnatural shades invoke a fantastical otherworldliness, belied by a familiar reminiscence of similarly-hued childhood playgrounds. As one painting offers environmental cues of being in an expansive outdoors – the glowing sun in a reflecting pool or an ombre sky rendered in discrete bands of color – another situates nature within the confines of neutral-toned architectural walls, effectively carrying out scale and perspectival shifts.

In *Bad Lands*, this tension between the earthly and artificially constructed compound within Ryan's world-building, shaped by the metaphysical space of memories of moving through landscapes inasmuch as the tangible literalness of his materials. Seen over multiple works, the schematization of terra forms prescribes a cerebral map of a ritualized commute, its commuter knowing intuitively to make a left turn after the trapezoidal hill, and to hang a right following a pair of bowl-shaped craters. In a subtle nod to the 1989 video game *Super Off Road*, Ryan demarcates these meandering routes with brightly-hued barricades that approximate the closed loops of racetracks. As the viewer journeys alongside the artist, repetitious elements begin to take a backseat while experiential variables – the cast of a shadow on a particular hour of the day - allow one to re-discover rote paths anew.

Jonathan Ryan was born in 1989 in Buffalo, NY. He received his BFA from Louisiana State University and his MFA from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University. Ryan has exhibited across the US and Europe, including three solo shows at the Landing (Los Angeles, CA). He has also been in group exhibitions at Monti8 (Latina, Italy) Gerhard Hofland (Amsterdam), Ekru Project (Kansas City, MO), Tiger Strikes Asteroid (Los Angeles, CA), The Brand Library (Glendale, CA), Gallery ALSO (Los Angeles, CA), Field Projects (New York, NY), San Diego Art Institute (San Diego, CA), and the Woodmere Art Museum (Philadelphia, PA). He has received fellowships and awards from Woodmere Museum of Art, Tyler School of Art, Vermont Studio Center, and LSU School of Art.

Image: Jonathan Ryan, *Shortcut*, 2023, oil and sand on canvas, 56 x 80 inches (142.2 x 203.2 cm)