

HESSE FLATOW

Neal, Patrick. "Elizabeth Hazan: Playful visionary." *Two Coats of Paint*. Online. February 7, 2024.

TWO COATS OF PAINT

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SOLO SHOWS

Elizabeth Hazan: Playful visionary

February 7, 2024 8:59 am



Elizabeth Hazan, *Glade*, 2022, oil on linen, 66 x 55 inches

Contributed by Patrick Neal / [Elizabeth Hazan's](#) exhilarating oil paintings, on view at [Hesse Flatow](#) gallery in Chelsea, marry old-school color field abstraction and loopy, gestural shorthand. Her medium-sized and large-scale canvasses fluctuate between recognizable landscape formations and patchworks of chromatic passages. In a style that

HESSE FLATOW

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is seriously playful, elemental motifs like trees and lakes are rendered as simple squiggles and glyphs straddling blocks of heightened color combinations. The paintings feel worked but never labored, and unleash the uniquely expressive power of color, line, and scale.

The exhibition's title, "[Under the Sun,](#)" hints at the central entry point into Hazan's work. Her compositions are conceived as segmented land formations seen from overhead: a bird's-eye view. Hazan has acknowledged the influence of maps, and in her paintings one can perceive traces of both the wind rose lines of old nautical charts and the gridded satellite surveillance tracks of Google Earth. More often, though, they have the carefree, pop-culture energy of zines, cartoons, and iPhone animations. It's easy to spot semblances of territorial borders defined by fields, lakes, pastures, and paths. This naturalism comes in varying degrees, as Hazan pits woozy representation against rigid geometry, asking viewers to consider the illusion of a hovering three-dimensional runway and then bringing them back to a flat, resolute picture plane.



Elizabeth Hazan, *Field #135*, 2023, oil on canvas, 24 x 20 inches

HESSE FLATOW

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Elizabeth Hazan, *Nightshade*, 2023, oil on linen, 66 x 55 inches

The vertical orientation of the paintings accentuates an up-to-down, blue-sky-to-green-grass axis, which affords Hazan an ample playing field for showcasing her painting chops. In many works, feathery scrubs, stains, and forms reminiscent of early [Rothko](#) live alongside surreal linear scaffolding à la [Arshile Gorky](#). Trees and clouds morph into blobs, sacs, and thought-bubbles, bringing to mind the trippy dippy stylings of [Heidi Hahn](#), [Carroll Dunham](#), and early [Peter Saul](#).

In some works, the upper region of the canvas is topped with a tree or cloud hieroglyph that turns into a fog bank, smog, or a cloud. In zanier compositions, animated cypress- or willow-like trees all but morph into corndogs and cotton candy on popsicle sticks. *Glade*, with its sinuous arcs and furls sitting atop a buttery yellow, recalls [de Kooning's late "ribbon paintings"](#) and [Matisse's *Joy of Life*](#). Some glyphs look like characters from the Greek alphabet or Parisian signage, while others resemble peacock plumes, rooster combs, spades, or orange slices. *Field 135* is plucky and Gorky-esque, flattening into an animated scrum of logos and sheet music. *Nightshade* pulsates with the tribal energy of a club kid covered in glowing body paint moving to electronic dance

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music. *Cherry* channels [Shara Hughes](#) as a dark, wiry line leads through the meandering trails of summer camp before assuming the upright form of a calligraphic Dorothy Dehner-type sculpture.



Elizabeth Hazan, *Cherry*, 2023, oil on linen, 24 x 20 inches

Hazan's free-form sketches in watercolor and ink imbue her compositions with liberated spontaneity. But, in translating the viscous flow of ink on paper to oil on canvas, she prefers rather chunky demarcations, sometimes with dashed or inlaid lines to suggest partitions, mounds, echoes, or waves. In paintings like *Field #146* and *Evening with Orange*, inky contour lines segue from earthbound surefootedness to airborne loftiness. Different pastoral motifs are revisited and reimagined in small- and large-scale compositions, loosely articulated or tightly wound.

Her work's material physicality and her lack of any fixed pictorial agenda had me wondering at times whether Hazan was a process painter at heart. Her bright, brimming colors can certainly be tied to dramatic climatic surprises and the temperament of nature. But the oddly retro colors in relation to the funky hieroglyphs also produce nostalgic

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associations with mid-century modern graphic design and vintage comics. Paintings like *Vista* and *Field #135* conjure [Tom Eckersley's quirky posters](#) and the ears, mouse tails, bricks, and cannon balls of [Krazy Kat](#). In fact, the yin-and-yang of embedded associations and processes in Hazan's paintings has something in common with the work of Alex Hubbard and Amy Sillman, who also work across media and source material. In Hazan's case, there seems to be a sincere inclination to push the abstract accomplishments of forebears like [Ronnie Landfield](#) or [Myoko Ito](#) toward new possibilities. *Floodtide* is a standout painting that synthesizes her myriad aesthetic sensibilities, the mistletoe palette of deep red and green accentuated by turquoise and cadmium yellow that bringing to life a hot canopy of advancing billows.



Elizabeth Hazan, *Field #146*, 2023, oil on canvas, 24 x 20 inches

HESSE FLATOW

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Elizabeth Hazan, *Evening with Orange*, 2022, oil on linen, 66 x 55 inches

Picasso famously quipped, "There is no abstract art. You must always start with something. Afterward you can remove all traces of reality." The sentiment suggests that ideas don't grow on trees but might be inspired by them. As a child, Hazan spent time on the east end of Long Island, with its flat and open vistas, and has lived her entire life in New York City, with its distinct boroughs and neighborhoods. Her abstract terrains are akin to [Richard Diebenkorn's](#) hilly cityscapes, characterized by gridded lattices of overhead rooftops, asphalt expanses, and lawns. For both artists, the sensual physicality of paint assures abundant expressive vitality within abstract formations drawn from personally meaningful places. "Under the Sun" reveals Hazan as an artist comfortable in the place where she has arrived, and painting at the top of her game.

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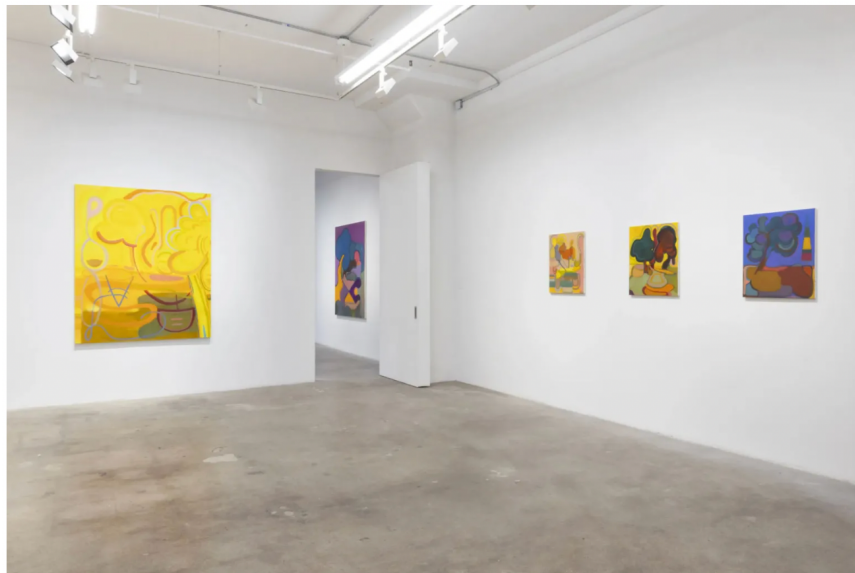
Elizabeth Hazan, Vista, 2023, oil on linen, 66 x 55 inches

HESSE FLATOW

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Elizabeth Hazan, *Floodtime*, 2023, oil on linen, 76 x 70 inches



Hesse Flatow: Elizabeth Hazan, *Under the Sun*, 2024, Installation View

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"Elizabeth Hazan: Under the Sun," Hesse Flatow, 508 W. 26th Street, Suite 5G, New York, NY. Through February 24, 2024.

About the author: **Patrick Neal**, a regular contributor to *Two Coats of Paint*, is a painter, freelance art writer, and longtime resident of Long Island City. His work is currently on view in the exhibition *Addition/Subtraction* at the Church of St. Paul the Apostle on W. 60th Street and Columbus Avenue, New York, NY, which features artists from the Openings Collective. There will be an artist walk-through and closing reception on February 8th from 7:00–9:00 PM.

Tags: [Elizabeth Hazan](#), [Hesse Flatow](#), [Patrick Neal](#), [Under the Sun](#)