

SEARS·PEYTON·GALLERY

NEW YORK·LOS ANGELES

Jen Wink Hays

CV

Born in Bath, Maine, Jen Wink Hays now lives and works in Philadelphia, PA. She studied visual art and art history at Barnard College in New York City. She is the co-founder of New York City's Blue School.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 Solo exhibition at the University of Maine Museum of Art, Bangor, ME
- 2019 *Wonderous Ponderous*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY
- 2018 *Playing Field*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY
- 2017 *Vacationland*, Art Bastion, Miami, FL
- 2016 *Almanac*, Uprise Art, New York, NY
Almanac Annex, The Kitchen Table, New York, NY
- 2016 Free Arts at The Reserve, Uprise Art, New York, NY
- 2016 Market Art + Design, Uprise Art Booth, Bridgehampton, NY
- 2014 *Fathom*, Uprise Art, New York, NY

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Winter Selections*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY
- 2019 *Summer Essentials*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY
- 2019 Maine Museum of Art, *Summer of Painting: Selections from the Museum Collection*, Bangor, ME
- 2019 *Salone di Mobile Annex Launch Exhibition*, BDDW Annex Gallery, Milan, Italy
- 2019 *Inauguration*, BDDW Annex Gallery, New York, NY
- 2018 *High Summer*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY
- 2018 *Salone di Mobile*, BDDW Santa Marta, Milan, Italy
- 2017 *At a Languorous Pace*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY
- 2017 *Art Show: Bedford*, Westchester, NY
- 2016 *Art Show: Bedford*, Westchester, NY
- 2016 *ElteMKT*, Uprise Art, Toronto, Ontario
- 2016 Tribeca Art Night, First Edition + Artsy, Uprise Art, New York, NY
- 2016 *Free Arts/Junior Board Exhibition and Auction*, Uprise Art, New York, NY
- 2016 *Affordable Art Fair*, Spring, Framebridge, New York, NY
- 2015 *Affordable Art Fair*, Fall, Uprise Art, New York, NY
- 2015 *Market Art and Design*, Uprise Art, Bridgehampton, NY

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- 2015 *Art After Dark*, Room & Board, Uprise Art, New York, NY
- 2015 *Free Arts NYC*, Uprise Art, New York, NY
- 2014 *Guild Hall Members Group Show*, East Hampton, NY
- 2014 *The Norwood Exhibition*, Uprise Art, New York, NY
- 2014 *Affordable Art Fair*, Fall, Uprise Art, New York, NY
- 2014 *D.E. Shaw; Paperworks*, Group Show, New York, NY
- 2013 *Affordable Art Fair*, Spring, Uprise Art, New York, NY
- 2013 *Paper Party*, Haus Interiors, New York, NY
- 2013 *Best and The Brightest*, BaubleBar, Uprise Art, New York, NY
- 2013 *The National Arts Club, A.I.R. Gallery, Saint Paul's Chapel, Ontology Shop*, New York

SELECTED PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

- University of Maine Museum of Art, Bangor, ME
- New York Presbyterian Hospital Solarium Collection, New York, NY
- The Jennings Hotel, Joseph, OR
- West Wing Writers, Wall Street Headquarters, New York, NY
- Weill Cornell Hospital, New York, NY
- 200 Water Street, Dumbo, Me & General Design Model Home, Dumbo, NY
- Homepolish, Casey Dubois private collection, New York, NY
- DDG /XOCO 325 , New York, NY
- Rise Tower, Richardson Sadeki Architects, Miami, FL
- Sliding Doors Atrium, Brooklyn, NY
- David Kleiweg de Zwaan private collection, New York, NY

PRESS + PROJECTS

- 2019 Domino Magazine: *True to Form*, editorial feature by Fiorella Valdesolo
- 2018 Artsy: *Playing Field: The Art of Jen Wink Hays*, editorial feature by Amy Rahn
- 2017 Miami Magazine: *Maine Attraction*, editorial feature by Rebecca Kleinman
- 2017 Almost Essential, UK: *Seeing Between The Layers with Jen Wink Hays' Vacationland*, editorial feature by Nico Kos Earle
- 2017 OEN: *The Process of Subtraction*, Paintings by American Painter Jen Wink Hays, editorial feature
- 2016 Domino: *Meet Jen Wink Hays, At Home with The Artist*, editorial feature
- 2016 The Jealous Curator, editorial
- 2016 Market Art + Design Fair: featured artist for all online, collateral material and signage
- 2016 Lonny: *A Gallerist's Industrial, Artful Home*, featured artwork
- 2014 Refinery 29: *8 Things To Do In NYC This Week*, editorial
- 2014 Architectural Digest Online: *Art Fair Roundup*, featured artist

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- 2014 Design Milk: *Start Collecting Original Artwork with Uprise*, featured artist
- 2014 Harper's Bazaar: *How To Buy Art Online*: featured artist
- 2014 DWR Catalog – “Fail Safe” featured on cover
- 2013 Quarterly Co., Featured Artist
- 2013 Tumblr Open Arts Award “The Way I See”
- 2013 Minted, West Elm Challenge – 4 winning pieces
- 2013 Art in Limbo: *An Art Fair For Everyone*, editorial
- 2013 One Kings Lane Journal: *At Home with Jen Wink*, editorial
- 2011 Momfilter: *Foot Fetish*, editorial
- 2011 WABC News: *New School of Thought*
- 2010 The New York Times: *Inventive Private School Faces Old Hurdles*, editorial feature
- 2009 BBC: *Visit the Blue School* with the BBC
- 2009 Time Magazine: *At Blue School, Kids Rule*, editorial feature
- 2008 Imagine It, British television documentary segment on Blue School

RELATED EXPERIENCE

- 1998 Founder, Utility Design, New York, NY
- 2006 Co-Founder, Blue School, New York, NY

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Jen Wink Hays

Artist Statement

Jen Wink Hays is a painter and sculptor based in Philadelphia, PA. Her oil paintings are characterized by her use of a bold, dissonant color palette that blends subdued earthy tones with aggressive, synthetic neons. Incomplete visual layers also convey struggle and resolution in Hays' work. There is a push/pull between what is shown and what is concealed as if something is at once being covered over and peeled away. Says the artist, "I'm interested in 'the glimpse' and the way that partially obscuring something or keeping it hidden can give it more power – and energize what remains in view. I am also drawn to the way this sets up a truly dynamic, unpredictable visual field where unintentional collisions of color and form can take place." Hays work in sculpture encompasses a variety of familiar, user-friendly mediums including paper pulp, paper mache, plaster and clay. The resulting groupings of colorful, eccentric forms—sometimes geometric sometimes more biomorphic—play off of Hays' oil paintings.

Hays has exhibited nationally and internationally, including New York City, Los Angeles, Miami, Edinburgh and Milan and her work is included in the permanent collection at the University of Maine Museum of Art. Hays' recent solo shows include *Wondrous Ponderous* (2019) and *Playing Field* (2018) both with Sears Peyton Gallery in New York City. In 2017, Hays' brought her show *Vacationland* to Miami's Wynwood art district with Art Bastion Gallery. In mid-fall 2020, Hays will undertake her first museum show at University of Maine Museum of Art in Bangor, Maine.

Hays is originally from a quaint, small town in coastal Maine. She moved to New York City as a teenager to attend Barnard College and has lived in big cities ever since. Hays finished her undergrad years at Barnard—where she completed a dual major in modern art history and studio art—ready to practice art full-time. This, of course, was easier said than done. To supplement her ongoing studio work, Hays worked in a variety of creative fields; as an editorial designer (Village Voice), a small business owner (Utility Design) an off-Broadway dramaturg (Blue Man Group), a founder of an independent Manhattan day school (Blue School). About ten years ago, Hays was able to make the transition to full-time painter and sculptor. Today she lives and works in Philadelphia with her kids and husband, fellow painter Tyler Hays.



Playing Field: A Conversation with Jen Wink Hays

Amy Rahn

March 16, 2018

Jen Wink Hays' first solo exhibition at New York gallery Sears-Peyton features more than twenty new paintings in oil and gouache that interweave prismatic color forms in a complex interplay of spaces. Hays, who grew up in coastal Maine and lived in New York for twenty-five years, now lives and works in Philadelphia. In what follows, Hays explains some of the sources and resonances of her recent work.

Amy Rahn: Can you talk about the title for the show? What does *Playing Field* represent for you?

Jen Wink Hays: The paintings in "Playing Field" have a spread, out, dynamic quality that makes me think of a freeze frame at a sporting event, as if the figures are engaged in some sort of physical interplay with a set of rules and a clear boundary line. I have always explored various groupings and densities of forms as a way of creating a visual story and dynamic tension in my paintings. In this body of work, I have moved away from more complex, interlocking color zones to more solid, simple backgrounds. With a simplified color "field," I have been able to highlight the drama, movement and interrelatedness between forms.

The title is also a play on the word "field"— like the fields of tall grass and wildflowers that I was surrounded by as a kid in Maine and that have inspired so much of my work over the years. The field that jumps most readily in my mind's eye is the untouched, ten-acre field that used to separate my childhood home from my grandparents' house. My brother and I spent a lot of time walking back and forth across the mowed path not giving it much thought, but subconsciously charting the changes that each season would bring; green poking through in the spring, scattered lupine and dandelions with a layer of hovering bugs in the summer, fireflies at night. My paintings are in some ways a refracted and personalized interpretation of the natural world that I grew up in.

AR: I've noticed you sometimes use oil, and sometimes gouache—what determines your use of each medium?

JWH: In any medium, my work tends to incorporate opaque blocks of color without a lot of blending or gradation. Transitions from color to color are most often strong and clear. With a good amount of medium mixed in, I can get these incredibly dense, opaque

flowing masses of color with oil paint. This lends itself to the subtractive, covering-over process that I incorporate while working on canvas.

The pieces on paper are more carefully constructed and entirely additive. It is more about careful use of whitespace and playing around with dense clusters of clean, sharper shapes. Gouache gives me the kind of coverage and opacity that I'm looking for when I do this work on paper.

AR: In your statement you write about concealing and revealing—what are the references for concealing and revealing that you find most relevant to your work? In other words, do you connect to the concealing/revealing concept more as a metaphor, or more formally—in a push/pull Hans Hofmann kind of way?

JWH: Both, I suppose, although it is more of a formal, literal visual tension that I'm pursuing. I'm not trying to present an objective reality in my oil paintings (the gouache on paper work is a bit more ambiguous in that regard). The concealing and revealing that I'm working with is just a very matter of fact exploration of layering and juxtaposing – searching for provocative relationships. In the metaphorical realm, I find resonance as well – although this is mostly layered on after the fact. I'm happy to leave the metaphorical interpretation to the individual viewer.

AR: Your palette seems very specific. Can you talk about the colors you choose?

JWH: I use color to control the intensity and story of a piece. Most works have neutral, grounding tones mixed with some brighter, flashier ones as well. A huge part of the work that I do in the studio each day is finding my way to color resolutions that work for me or get me excited. There is a balance that must be struck between soft and hard, bold and subdued, so that a given painting feels alive and resolved at the same time. I know that I'm drawn to certain base colors over and over, but I'd like to think no color is off-limits.

AR: Does place have any bearing on your work? Do you see vestiges of your surroundings showing up in your paintings?

JWH: I definitely ruminate about the geography of my life while I work – where I come from and how it shaped my view of things, where I live now and how it shapes my view of things. I'm not really coming from a nostalgic place although my earliest environments come up for me a lot, particularly in my works that are more suggestive of natural, field-born forms. And the impulse to juxtapose organic and synthetic elements in the work relates to the pull that I feel in my life between a busy, sharp edged city life and the simpler, softer environment that I came up in.

AR: Do you think your works are related to architecture? To design?

JWH: Not directly, no.

AR: Who are the artists that most inspire you, and how do they inspire you?

JWH: Phillip Guston, because of his ability to surprise and delight and his uncharacteristic forms, colors, and compositions. There's something very blatant and unafraid about his work and yet it is *so* appealing visually. His work has an element of humor as well, but it isn't like he is delivering a simple visual punchline with his hairy, smoking cubic volumes. He seems to be communicating something that is important to him with a highly distinctive personal language. I love the way he combines generalized abstracted forms with entirely literal, recognizable ones – as a viewer, this keeps me slightly off kilter.

Milton Avery, because of his mind-blowing use of paint and color. Pure mastery there. When I'm walking through a giant art fair and a painting catches my eye and draws me in, 80% of the time it is by Milton Avery. There is something so personal in the way he presents subject matter, with some aspects highly distorted or nearly abstracted while others are perfectly realistic. He has used the medium of paint to show us a new way of seeing but unlike the cubists (for example), he manages to create jaw-droppingly beautiful paintings at the same time.

Helen Frankenthaler, because I want to eat her paintings. Or live in them. More than any other artist I can think of, she demonstrates how a purely abstract painting can have an arc and a complete story.

AR: Do you perceive anything that's changed in these works from what you were making before?

JWH: I'm definitely pushing into more solid, monochrome backgrounds in this recent body of work as a way of simplifying and emphasizing certain aspects but also as a way of featuring and elevating the forms themselves. It is clear with these oil paintings that large parts of the painting have been covered over and I think this amplifies the tension that exists between what is shown and what is hidden – concealing and revealing. The white space in the paper works create a similar dramatic foreground/background effect where the forms themselves are more highlighted than they would be if they were in a more complex, fully-painted field. Some of the pieces where the shapes are more evenly spaced give off a greater sense of potential energy, as if all the players have taken their positions and are waiting for the starting whistle.

Wall Street International

ART

Jen Wink Hays

February 22, 2018

Wall Street International Magazine

Jen Wink Hays' first solo exhibition with Sears–Peyton Gallery, *Playing Field*, abstracts the formal conceit of figures in a field to stage a sustained visual drama of the painterly concepts of figure and ground. Across more than twenty works in either oil or gouache, Hays' works interweave foreground and background in a prismatic interplay of spaces.

Hays' use of space and color reflects her appreciation of Milton Avery's subtle color geometries and Helen Frankenthaler's luminous, almost inhabitable fields of soaked pigment. "She [Frankenthaler] demonstrates how a purely abstract painting can have an arc and a complete story," Hays explains.

Raised in Maine and currently living in Philadelphia, Hays' forms—dispersed in expanses that both surround and unite them—can be seen to reference both the open field she walked between her house and her grandparents' in Maine as a child, and the urban landscape that surrounds individual buildings in Philadelphia. In Hays' painting *Dreams and Things*, marigold–yellow polygons and orbs of spring green radiate from beneath a subtle field of gray–pink.

Rendered in a palette reminiscent of the pale intensities of fellow Mainer Lois Dodd, the forms in the painting levitate in peaceful balance with the field that weights them from above, tilting the eye in and out of the painting's spaces. Hays' own dramas of space, color, and form hold the intensities of color and field in breathless suspension.



ALMOST ESSENTIAL
LONDON

Seeing between the layers with Jen Wink Hays' Vacationland show

By Niko Kos Earle

Almost Essential / London

March 30, 2017

“Passion lies between one mark and the next, and also within all of them.” Howard Hodgkin

Jen Wink Hays paints with the canvas flat on her studio table, peering down into its emergent world like a bird in the sky. Playful and beguiling, her paintings and works on paper induce a sense of wonder, curiosity and even elation. It is a feeling akin to looking out of the airplane window flying high above the clouds, perhaps en route to a favourite place. The eye searching, the mind wandering and the heart dreaming, hence the title to her first show opening in Miami at Art Bastion on the 22nd of April: Vacationland.

“I am originally from a beautiful, small town in coastal Maine where I experienced a salty-air childhood directly from the pages of a Robert McCloskey book. I moved to New York City as a teenager to attend Barnard College and have somehow lived in big cities ever since,” says Hays.

A sense of dreamtime is of particular relevance to the work of Hays. Captivating at first glance, both the repetition of form and a distinctly aerial perspective give her work a familiar, almost cartographic aspect. We intuit her paintings as an imaginative landscapes. Certain aspects of her work draw parallels with the Dreamings of Aboriginal artists, recalling memories of their native landscape through naive mapping. The term is used to describe relations and balance between the spiritual, natural and moral elements of the world.

One might imagine she is channelling memories from her childhood whilst working from her studio in Pennsylvania, near the home which she shares with her husband artist Tyler Hays and their children. Her titles too reinforce this sense of a landscape observed from above: Moving Ridge, Sunken Meadow, Hidden Causeway, Field and Stream and Other Things. Mapping somewhere, in particular a feeling about a place, is central to the interpretation of her work, but the process is less about nostalgia and more about creating uninhibited. With this dynamic new body of work for Vacationland, Hays had the place in which these paintings would be shown in mind: Miami. A city Hays describes as her “happy place”.

“Miami is the city I have returned to again and again over the years to recharge and reset. It has special significance for me and I associate it with optimism and renewal. As I set out to create the work for this show, I noticed an instinctive brightening and energizing of the color palette that reflects my feelings about this place.”

Locating the work in an actual place however, is far too simplistic a reading of the work. Just as a first visit somewhere or a chance encounter might spark curiosity, the key to appreciating these works is to look more deeply. Step into the work and you will discern a sophisticated interplay of multiple layers, which both obscure and secure the biomorphic forms within. These units of pattern are comprised of bounded areas or volumes that contain a repeating combination of elements and number of colours.

Unlike Aboriginal Dreamings which call a specific terrain to mind, these biomorphic forms are brought forth unconsciously in a kind surrealist automatism – one that channels an inner state rather than any specific place. Hays begins each new work from this unselfconscious position: each mark on the canvas informs the next, giving a rhythm and flow to the work and a sense of organic growth.

Surrealist automatism is a method of making art in which the artist suppresses conscious control over the making process, allowing the unconscious mind free reign. Pioneered by the Dadaist Andre Masson, other notable artists who used the method include Jean Arp, Salvador Dali and Joan Miro whose work was “a sandbox for the subconscious mind, a re-creation of the childlike”. [1] His pictorial language, with its instantly recognisable motifs, marked a soulful connection to the landscape of his childhood. Still a popular starting point for artists like James Hunter or Frances Aviva Blane, this method liberates the artist from rational control and allows them to discover the uncharted territories of their subconscious mind.

“Lately my work has become much looser and more gestural as I’ve moved from gouache back to oil paint. It has been a revelation for me in terms of process and the experience of art making.”

The strength of Hays process and resulting images lies in what she does next, after this initial outpouring. She intervenes: building up the painting through a series of increasingly controlled layers. This intervention, like a zoom in zoom out, is also procedurally connected to our constant toggle between the organic and the synthetic. Her use of colour too conveys this delicate interplay, often blending earthy tones with riotous neons. It is the plane in the sky, above the clouds.

This first layer of intuitive, automatic and unconscious marking gives each painting an authentically Hays signature.

OEN

The Process of Subtraction – Paintings by American Artist Jen Wink Hays

By Mark Robinson

OEN

December 14th, 2016

So many creatives go through a process of adding and subtracting, usually in this order, so it's interesting when these ideas are experimented with and played on. This usually happens to me but gradually with time and progress, taking quite a while to strip back leaving only the essentials. So I'm intrigued how this can be implemented in to the process itself, taking away as you work.

Jen Wink Hays is from Maine and now lives and works in the relative calm of Philadelphia with her husband, fellow painter and designer Tyler Hays. The American artist uses opaque oil paint to obscure earlier layers of colour and form, creating what she calls "a-story-within-a-story" experience. The layers allow her to explore the idea of concealing and revealing, both adding and taking away to reveal a story behind the piece.

Although the works are abstract they're not conventional by any means, this method of obscuring gives them a unique twist that I've not seen before. Some even come across as pixelated because of the small bite-sized coloured squares. I hope you like these new works from Jen and will view more on her website linked below.

jenwinkhays.com



At Home With Minted Artist Jen Wink Hays

By Anna Kocharian

Domino Magazine, June 9, 2016

Hailing from a small town in Maine, Jen Wink Hays barely touched a paintbrush before moving to New York City for college. She began painting while studying at Barnard College, where she completed a dual major in Visual Arts and Art History. Following graduation, Hays went on to establish Utility Design, a NYC-based design firm, and Blue School, a progressive, independent school in lower Manhattan.

With a passion for exploring naturally occurring patterns, and finding the commonalities and contrasts between the natural and the man-made, Hays' unique perspective is quite evident in her works. Today, the artist spends her days painting, full-time, and raising her three little ones (plus two dogs!) along with her husband, Tyler. Here, Hays, touches on her inspirations and the two things she simply can't live without.

WHERE DO YOU FEEL MOST INSPIRED?

I am most inspired in my art studio – in the presence of great raw materials, light, and music.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR PERSONAL STYLE?

My style is relatively laid-back. I love simplicity with hints of personal touches.

WHAT MAKES A HOME BEAUTIFUL?

Active and thoughtful spaces filled with personality – without piles of clutter. Natural light also has a pretty powerful effect on a home.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT BEING AN ARTIST?

Working directly with materials and not having to sit in on meetings all day. I love the complete freedom of being an artist.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST PRIZED POSSESSION?

The engagement ring that my husband made for me, and my kids' art. Assuming we are talking about non-living things.

ON WHAT ITEMS DO YOU SCRIMP?

I ride around on a scooter a lot and am a little less likely to call an Uber (than other city-dwellers I know!).

ON WHAT ITEMS DO YOU SPLURGE?

Very weird or unique antiques and objects, progressive education, and organic food.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE TRAVEL DESTINATION?

The Willowa Lake region of Oregon (where my husband is from) is the most beautiful and replenishing place I've ever been. I'm from Maine, so that is saying something.