

## A New Show Brings to Life the Psychedelic World of *Nest*'s Joseph Holtzman

The exhibition indicates just how good artworks can look inside a maximalist interior



Inside Parker Gallery. Photo: Daniel Terna

Immersive experiences are Joseph Holtzman's forte. Just ask anyone who was a fan of *Nest*, the subversive interiors magazine that the artist founded and published from 1997 until 2004. *Nest* was a visual triumph of special effects, its photographs framed by exciting patterns and motifs and occasionally perforated with amoebic shapes or coated with glitter, less about a room than about a mood, an escape. The otherworldly assemblage strangely never fought with the images that were the ostensible focus of the stories but only enhanced them, as *The Best of Nest* (Phaidon), bears colorful witness. Holtzman's Madison Avenue apartment, just down the hall from *Nest*'s office, was a three-dimension evocation of the magazine that he edited, its walls and ceilings striped with intersections of paint and pattern, resulting in a sublimely helter-skelter euphoria filled with treasures, rarities, and one-offs.

Mitchell Owens, "A New Show Brings to Life the Psychedelic World of *Nest*'s Joseph Holtzman." *Architectural Digest* (December 8, 2020), accessed online.



All around, small moments of color and pattern delight. Photo: Daniel Terna

That domestic phantasmagoria is back, sort of. On view by appointment through December 20, “Joseph Holtzman: Six Recent Paintings” is displayed in the Baltimore native’s old digs, which has been outfitted in evocative *Nest* style. Given COVID-19, the installation was a logistical challenge, designed by Holtzman and created with a socially distanced contractor and workman over a five-month period. “Everything that you see in the room was brought in and designed very specifically for the space,” Sam Parker of Los Angeles’ Parker Gallery explains of the East Coast staging he organized, which celebrates new Holtzman works that were inspired by a trip to Hydra and “can be read as turbulent seascapes, however abstracted.”

The swirling seascapes may have an organic sense of movement but the room in which they are contained, Holtzman’s former living room, is mathematically graphic. Kvadrat felt in shades of mint green, yellow, purple, blue, and black have been sliced, diced, and reconfigured into fuzzy inlaid boisserie à la

Piet Mondrian. More Kvadrat felt, this time red, joins vintage silver wallpaper to create a faux-coffered ceiling. Flowered-chintz seating with ruffled skirts is positioned on colorful 1940s linoleum carpets, while the articulated lights that illuminate Holtzman’s paintings are dental lamps from the late 19th- and early 20th-centuries, all of them made by the same manufacturer. “They’re an ode to Joe’s genius obsessiveness,” Parker observes, adding that the patterned fabric that lines the apartment’s entrance hall is Herb, the elegant and infamous marijuana-leaf chintz that Holtzman designed during the *Nest* years.

“There is this overall feeling of being suspended in time,” says Parker of Holtzman’s personal aesthetic, which he experienced firsthand at Camp Nest, Holtzman’s fantastical retreat near Chatham, New York. Thus, it took no time for an idea to ferment: an exhibition of Holtzman’s latest works set in a space that would embody his unique style. “I was thrilled to see his paintings for the first time, especially with my understanding of what Nest was all about: they are by a very different sort of hand,” Parker continues of the works, large sheets of white marble that have been brushed with thin washes of oil paint which are then scratched, etched, and otherwise scarified to create a ghostly, hypnotic sense of depth to the expressionistic scenes they depict. “The more time I spent with them, the more I was surprised to see how many historical references were embedded in them, references to the entire Western canon of painting as well as decorative arts.” And, he continues, “Seen in a room with natural light, they almost appear to be backlit.”

Though the apartment’s temporary new decor recalls its gloriously idiosyncratic appearance of old, it is not a simulacrum by any means. Still the visual and spiritual connections between the two make an important statement. “It’s a nice parallel relationship to our space, which was also a domestic environment from the same period,” Parker says, referring to Parker Gallery, which is located in a 1920s Tudor Revival house in Los Angeles’ historic Los Feliz neighborhood. “Joe has an encyclopedic knowledge of art, architecture, and design, so being in the exhibition is almost like experiencing him think, which is unique for any environment or interior in general to do.”

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