

GARAGE

Joseph Holtzmann's Landscapes and Nocturnes

Parker Gallery is hosting a pop-exhibition in New York featuring the artist-designer's oil paintings.



Joseph Holtzman: *Six Recent Paintings*, Installation View. Photo Daniel Terna

Los Angeles' Parker Gallery presents its first solo presentation of artist, designer, and *Nest* founder Joseph Holtzman, in a pop-up exhibition in a building in New York's Upper East Side, which once housed the original *Nest* magazine offices, a magazine that revolutionized the way we look at interior spaces and decoration. The exhibition features intriguing paintings of oil on marble that invite the viewer's eye further in; in some places the artist shows the marble through the paint, in others the marble is incised or slightly carved. Transformed into Holtzman's own Gesamtkunstwerk environment, the six installed paintings represent cumulative decades absorbing an encyclopedic inventory of decoration, art history, and historic textiles. The current exhibition coincides with the release of *The Best of Nest*, the first print monograph on *Nest* magazine, which Holtzman ran and published from 1997 to 2004. Published by Phaidon and edited by Holtzman's longtime collaborator Todd Oldham, it features the work of writers and photographers such as Michael Cunningham, Patti Smith, Nan Goldin, and Derry Moore. The exhibition is currently open by

Haley Mellin, "Joseph Holtzmann's Landscapes and Nocturnes." *Garage* (November 20, 2020), accessed online.

appointment until December 20. GARAGE caught up with Sam Parker, of Parker Gallery, to discuss the exhibition.

How did Joseph Holtzman and Parker Gallery begin to work together?

Larry Rinder, the director of the Berkeley Art Museum (and former *Nest* contributor), introduced me to Joe at the opening of a show he had in Los Angeles two years ago. Shortly after, I visited Joe in upstate New York, and we began making plans for this show together. I was a fan of *Nest* and was surprised to learn about his painting practice, which he essentially kept secret until 2014, when his work first debuted at BAMPFA.

This is a show of landscapes and nocturnes. Does the artist consider this an installation?

The paintings are moody, atmospheric landscapes that evoke a psychological landscape as much as a physical place. The works titled “Nocturne” (as in the musical composition) reflect a landscape at night, illuminated by the moon. If anything, the installation is a background for the six paintings. The colors of the felt, ceiling wallpaper and palette of the linoleum rugs are all complimentary to the paintings. Everything in the room was designed to showcase the paintings.

Can you speak about Holtzman’s, *Aegean Landscape* (2020)?

This new body of work is largely inspired from a trip specifically to Hydra, in the Aegean Sea. The painting support is marble, which references the painted marble sculptures of Antiquity. The contradiction of painting seascapes on marble is echoed in “Wine-Face Sea,” which borrows its title from a phrase repeated in both Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, intriguingly comparing the sea to wine.



“AEGEAN LANDSCAPE,” 2020, OIL ON MARBLE IN ARTIST’S FRAME.
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND PARKER GALLERY. PHOTO BY DANIEL
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Why paint on marble?

Joe has always preferred to paint on hard, durable supports. His earliest paintings from the late 1970s, are on wood panel, and when he returned to painting after *Nest*, he was working on slate, which he would prepare with a gesso ground. Joe soon discovered a marble quarry in Vermont and began working with them to produce thin sheets of white marble. He will often use razor blades to incise the surface, addressing the sculptural nature of the material.

You both worked with John Nalewaja on the design and fabrication of the space.

Joe has worked with John for over three decades. John specializes in wall treatments. Everything in the room was designed by Joe for the presentation of these six new paintings.

I read the frames on the paintings are recycled chestnut, a local wood (nearly a dead species upstate New York where the artist lives) that he locates from old barns.

The frames are a practical solution that the artist designed to allow him to move the finished paintings around in the studio. They are artist-designed, but not necessarily integral to the paintings. One painting in the exhibition features a fully painted frame, but for the most part the works are framed after the painting is completed. Perhaps it is the decorator in Joe that wants to leave the option of re-framing the works open to collectors.

Parker Gallery is based in the Los Feliz neighborhood of Los Angeles. Is this your first east coast pop-up? In LA, the gallery is in a home, as well.

This is our second offsite exhibition in New York. Earlier this spring we launched a gallery exchange with Gordon Robichaux, where they hosted us in their New York gallery, and we hosted them in LA. For Joe's show, we took the opportunity to celebrate the launch of the *Best of Nest* with Joe's first exhibition on the East Coast in the very apartment from which *Nest* was operated. I've always felt the domestic context provides an intimate and thoughtful backdrop for viewing art. Many of the earliest galleries were in homes and a lot of artworks end up there too.

What was one of the challenges in making this exhibition?

The biggest challenge was creating an installation that did not overwhelm the paintings. I encouraged Joe to design a full room for these paintings as a way to tie together his painting, interior decoration and design. Joe did a similar room environment for his show at the Hammer, in Los Angeles, in 2015, and we wanted to debut his work on the East Coast with a full-blown installation.

What was one of the discoveries?

I was surprised to see how related his paintings are to his idiosyncratic design sensibility. At first glance, the two feel very different, but you slowly realize both practices are suspended in time. The paintings contain references to Antiquity, Renaissance altar panels, 19th century landscape, Chagall, Art Brut...while his interiors include 19th century dental lamps, walls covered in Danish felt, early American textiles, 1940s linoleum rugs; it is all thrown together to create the feeling of being deliriously out of sync.

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