



ZEN SEKAI GALLERY

# HALLER / HICKEY / JAMES



*abstracted landscapes*

February 18, 2023 through April 14, 2023



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HART JAMES**

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## Introduction

The words *landscape* or *landscaef* entered the English language via the Anglo Saxons around the 5th century. The terms referred primarily to human-built environments. It is not until the 16th century that the term *landscape* is used to describe the natural environment. This may be the result of an inability to see the container that contains us, the so-called fishbowl effect. Similarly, as Eugene Hargrove noted in *The Foundation of Environmental Ethics*, the concept of *the wilderness* was introduced in the 19th century by American painters like Frederic Edwin Church, Thomas Moran, and others at a time when it became apparent that such relatively untouched spaces needed proactive protection. It was around this time that the National Park system was established. Artists are often at the forefront of linguistic innovation, a result of the dominance of visual processing in our brains. Traditionally, painting occurs at the intersection of direct observation, established conventions and new language formation.

This exhibition features the work of three artists whose primary focus is the landscape. They represent three different approaches to the sub-genre of abstracted landscapes, which itself has a long history. To be sure, all landscape painting is an abstraction, whether it be a faithful representation of purely retinal phenomena or an extrapolation of the same. What we often call traditional landscape presents a set of historically established conventions that has undergone several major revolutions, e.g. the invention of perspective, the introduction of Impressionist color theory, etc. Within that long history there have been instances of landscape painting that can be characterized as more extreme abstraction; the last summer's work of John Frederick Kensett, the spiritual and romantic paintings of Ralph Albert Blakelock, or much of the work of the American Tonalists. I'm primarily focusing on American artists, and ignoring developments in Chinese, Japanese, Korean and other world art.



The term abstraction itself can be problematic, since all language is abstract; it foregrounds some phenomena and ignores the rest. Often what we call modern abstraction is a re-contextualization of forms that served primarily ornamental purposes, before being drafted for easel painting. Owen Jones' *The Grammar of Ornament*, published in 1856, is full of historical examples of the abstraction of natural forms in service of architectural and decorative intentions. Still, with the advent of the 20th century we begin to see the introduction of new categories of abstracted landscape, in the work of the Fauves, the Expressionists, and painters like Konstantin Alekseyevich Korovin and Lovis Corinth. In the United States we have those California painters called The Six, the New York Eight, the Canadian Group of Seven, and of course Georgia O'Keeffe, Charles Burchfield and Emily Carr. In the work of Piet Mondrian we have an example of a progressive reductivism from traditional conventions to sparse geometrical abstraction. The history of this type of work runs too deep to be adequately dealt with here, and must include the tradition of breaking with tradition.

I think that one can see in these three artists, Patty Haller, Suzo Hickey and Hart James, both innovation and respect for the abstracted landscape of those historical painters that came before. In their various ways they plumb the depth of feelings that the landscape embodies, in Haller's precisionist swirls, in Hickey's overt symbolism and James' violent expressionism. Their efforts are not diminished by the fact that they work in veins of rich tradition. It is strengthened by that relationship. I hope that you enjoy this exhibition, one that displays three different but internally coherent sensibilities.

– *William Elston, 2023*



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## Patty Haller

I AM AN ANALYST. I use imagery of forest plants which grow all around us in the Pacific Northwest. My goal is to create spatial botanical worlds.

I used to tell myself that I create order from the chaos of the leaves and branches I see in nature. But now I believe it's my own limited perception that prevents me from seeing something beyond chaos. There is a natural order to the way the plants grow, their density reflecting the available light and nutrients, their tracery reflecting their best bet to thrive. Plants even communicate through root systems, affecting the age and species mix. This is all more interesting than what I envision if all I do is look and simplify a scene as all artists are taught to do.

I've decided instead of reducing the forest into something I can understand and paint, I'll look for a few compelling simple forms and then build something very complex with my art processes. I hope my paintings will change with each year I gain a more scientific understanding of nature.

I love art history and enjoy seeing the impact of my studies on my work. But unexpectedly, my interest in statistics and data science helps me just as much to create the paintings. I treat the forest as a huge dataset I am free to analyze, summarize and reenter, creating systems of groupings that vary with each new panel.

This experimenting is endlessly fascinating to me. Every combination of ideas from seemingly separate bodies of knowledge is a great reason to make the next piece of art.

*(Excepted with permission from the artist's website.)*



## Suzo Hickey

Suzo Hickey is a painter and multidisciplinary artist living in Prince Rupert, BC. She was raised in Rupert and has returned after 45 years in Kamloops and Vancouver. She graduated from Emily Carr College of Art and Design in 1994, and since that time she has exhibited around BC and the US on themes of queer mothering, relocation, and death in the family.

Recently, Suzo's work has been the urban landscape. After constructing many shows around issues, she began examining the formal, enigmatic power of what was around her:

*"We get comfortable with power lines and ordinary houses in less-than- picturesque communities, and this might be where we see ourselves most clearly. When I looked more closely at what was around me, I saw its importance and its beauty. Tourists are not visiting these streets, but this is where we live. There are no iconic buildings, and no landmarks. They are the houses we build for ourselves, they are the trees we choose to plant – deserving of reverence."*

*(Excepted with permission from the artist's website.)*



## Hart James

*“My work speaks of the energy of nature. The current of the water, the flow of the air over us, the rock formations that form the foundation under our feet and the movement of those foundations. The natural world is very simply alive. It is nothing to be taken for granted. It is as much a part of us, as our circulatory system.”*

Growing up on a farm, Hart absorbed the natural world around her small child, self. A backpack filled with empty jars, Golden Guide Books on Insects, Plants and Birds, she spent all of her days studying the beauty, the transience, the processes and cycles, the details of construction in nature.

Hart has come to realize that few people have her background. In her early years on the farm, she spent all the daylight hours in nature. She wandered the family farm and the adjoining farms of neighbors. It was more than 1500 acres of countryside and farmland. In these surroundings, she became attuned to the natural world in a way that seems more connected to earlier societies, than with our present day world. She intuited natural processes that are just now being ‘discovered’ by modern scientists. Hart understood the infinity of space, the insignificance of man, the transient nature of life, and the omnipotent power of the life force of nature. This was at the age of ten.

After spending her young adult life absorbed with nature and art (museums, printmaking, and mixed media), Hart pursued a career in landscape design and installation. She approached this as an art form. Transforming spaces by moving large amounts of soil, large boulders to hold in river banks, adding dry laid stone paths and walls, or brick, building structures for the garden (breezeways, pergola, gates, etc), and planting 25’ trees down to the smallest of perennials. The boxwoods became Noguchi sculpture, the layering of plants juxtaposed with the man made elements became a painting framed by views from the windows.

*(Excepted with permission from the artist’s website.)*



Many of the works represented in this exhibition are from private collections. Some are for sale, either through the artist or their representative. If you have interest in a particular painting that is listed as for sale, you can send an inquiry via the contact form on this website. Your message will be passed on to the respective artist.



Suzo Hickey

ROCHE DE BOULE MOUNTAIN RANGE, 2020

24 x 48 inch (h x w)

acrylic on canvas



Suzo Hickey

MANY PEAKS TURQUOISE SKY, 2022

29 x 53 x inch (h x w)

acrylic on canvas



Suzo Hickey

PAT'S ERSTWHILE AVENUE, 2021

25 x 44 x inch (h x w)

acrylic on canvas





Suzo Hickey

HIGHWAY 16 YELLOWFLOWERS, 2022

35 x 55 x inch (h x w)

acrylic on canvas



Suzo Hickey

PREPARETO STOP, 2022

41 x 57 x inch (h x w)

acrylic on canvas



Suzo Hickey

FALL IS NOT DEATH, 2020

29 x 45 x inch (h x w)

acrylic on canvas





Suzo Hickey

DIRT ROAD STEGYAWDEN MOUNTAIN, 2021

38 x 51 x inch (h x w)  
acrylic on canvas



Suzo Hickey

CASSIAR SEDGE GRASS, 2021

33 x 57 x inch (h x w)  
acrylic on canvas



Patty Haller

A GENTLE RETURN, 2022

48 x 36 x inch (h x w)  
oil on panel





Patty Haller

EMBRACE THIS DAY, 2022

42 x 32 x inch (h x w)

oil on panel



Patty Haller

HOH VEGATATIVE SPACE, 2022

40 x 40 x inch (h x w)

oil on panel



Patty Haller

IN THAT MOMENT, WE SAW CLEARLY, 2020

32 x 32 inch (h x w)

oil on panel





Patty Haller

WALKING HOME, MY EYES ADJUSTING, 2022

50 x 50 x inch (h x w)  
oil on panel



Patty Haller

PACIFIC COAST GATHERING, 2020

44 x 56 x inch (h x w)  
oil on panel



Patty Haller

FROM SAMISH TO LUMMI, 2022

32 x 62 x inch (h x w)  
oil on panel





Patty Haller

MULTIVARIATE, 2022

50 x 50 x inch (h x w)  
oil on panel



Hart James

ALPINE MEADOW, 2022

36 x 36 x inch (h x w)  
oil and charcoal on canvas



Hart James

SOMEWHERE, 2022

36 x 36 x inch (h x w)  
oil and charcoal on canvas





Hart James

TIDAL RIPPLES, 2022

24 x 24 x inch (h x w)

oil and charcoal on canvas



Hart James

WHERE THE SNOW GEESE FLY, 2022

36 x 36 x inch (h x w)

oil and charcoal on canvas



Hart James

MAPLE GROVE, 2021

24 x 18 x inch (h x w)

oil on panel





Hart James

SOMEWHERE IN THE ROCKIES, 2022

36 x 36 x inch (h x w)

oil and charcoal on canvas



Hart James

THE COAST TO INFINITY, 2022

36 x 36 x inch (h x w)

oil and charcoal on canvas



Hart James

ON THE EDGE, 2020

36 x 36 x inch (h x w)

oil and charcoal on canvas





Hart James

DEEPWOODS, 2022

36 x 36 x inch (h x w)

oil and charcoal on canvas





“行春や 鳥啼き魚の 目は泪

Yuku haru ya/ Tori naki uwo no/ Me wa namida

Spring is passing.

The birds cry, and the fishes' eyes are

With tears.

– *Matsuo Basho*



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