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Rachel Hayes: 'Land Lines'

Exploring Perceptual Phenomena

by Jody Zellen



Rachel Hayes' exhibition *Land Lines* at Lowell Ryan Projects is a formally elegant and beautiful installation consisting of twelve (150 x 120 inch) fabric banners that are suspended from the gallery's twelve-foot high ceiling gracefully brushing against the concrete floor. The hanging

Rachel Hayes

Land Lines

Lowell Ryan Projects

May 16 - June 27, 2020 (by
appointment only)

banners become a maze through which viewers (who make an appointment) can wander. While the pieces are meant to reference the colors and sight lines in the natural landscape, they are geometric abstractions made from fabric sewn together to create interlocking rectangles of varying dimensions, transparencies and colors.

Hayes' installation shares affinities with Robert

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Irwin's 1998 installation at the **Dia Art Foundation** in **New York City**, *Prologue: x183* – windows covered with colored gels and rooms separated by transparent scrims, as well as the **California Light and Space** artists whose works explored perceptual phenomena surrounding light, space, volume and scale. She also draws from **Josef Albers'** studies of color relationships. While the exhibition is comprised of individual works, when seen together they become a layered montage of overlapping rectangles. The composition of geometric shapes suggests windows and passageways depending on the vantage point of the viewer and how they align with the architecture of the gallery.

RBH_LL04 (all works 2020) is made from different sized and colored pieces of polyester, nylon and cotton. These fabrics are sewn together to create patterns of horizontal and vertical rectangles that range in tone and transparency, oscillating between opaque black, sheer white



and hues of pinks, grays, yellows, gold and purples. Each section of fabric is folded around the edges and then sewn, giving each shape a dark border or outline. Hayes carefully balances light and dark across the vertical and horizontal sections, paying attention to the relationships between complementary and opposing colors.

RBH_LL02 grows from the center out becoming a rectangular spiral whereas **RBH_LL03** is made up of two rows of vertical columns separated by horizontal bands. Each banner is a unique pattern with a specific rhythm based on shape and/or color relationships. They pay homage to the history of textile design, as well as quilting while simultaneously occupying space as sculptures.

While each banner has a precise arrangement of colored shapes, what makes the installation so compelling is the inter-relationships that form when the banners are

seen together. Standing at the back of the room, for example and looking toward the front windows, the suspended banners interact with the specificities of the space – the walls and windows change the tonalities within each work based on time of day and the amount of light.

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Looking through multiple rows of banners creates ever-changing, overlapping and criss-crossing fields of color. This overlap creates a more complex abstraction. Hayes' fabric banners have been installed in both interior and exterior spaces and she pays attention to the surroundings when designing the individual works. She is interested in how her works change the space around them and how the places where her works are installed come alive in new ways because of her interventions.



Cover image, installation view, *Land Lines*; all images courtesy Lowell Ryan Projects