



ARTnews

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Reviews

Lana Z Caplan
Gallery NAGA, Boston
by Joanne Silver

“This is a place which cannot be described completely,” a female hotel worker in the mountains of China’s Huangshan region tells the artist Lana Z Caplan. The observation, included in Caplan’s three channel video installation *The Loveliest Mountain of China* (2014), captures the challenge the artist faced in creating the images in this show, “Peach Blossom Spring.” Also featuring 12 ink-jet prints and a wall-size photomural, the exhibition conveyed the impossibility of representing a given location with a single objective description.

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when buildings, deserts, rolling hills, and snow-capped mountains are dissolved into their basic shapes—evoking rather than representing.

In Hall’s collage-like paintings, washed and layered brushstrokes are contained within the confines of angular colored areas that float and edge against each other. A fine example is *Green Hill* (1976), whose limited gray and blue masses appear to sparkle with muted glimmers of color. Though abstractly abstract, the composition suggests huge granite boulders darkening a sunny day to a small wedge of yellow peaks from the upper edge of the canvas. *Blue Hill* (1976) is equally abstract, featuring an eye-catching band of vibrant yellow that adds to the hopefulness of the work.

A number of Hall’s collage works, which she began in the 1960s, were displayed in a back room of one gallery. The 30-by-70-inch works in the 2010 “Stone Wall Studio” were more balanced by having lots of paper, boards saturated with each of their respective hues, over a neat-lined underpainting. Featuring other colors, and suggestive traces of organic, earthy color, these compositions echo their painted counterparts—but rather than alluring associations to distinctly American landscapes, the collages recall the colors in the ancient dwellings of Rome. As this show demonstrates, Hall’s paintings and collages pay homage to the essential, sensory elements of the natural landscape, all in some beauty. —*Greg Cize*

Lana Z Caplan

Rainy Night

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Lana Z Caplan, *Tree-Lined*, mixed media on oil, 90" x 107", Safety NAGA.

impossibility of representing a given location with single objective description.

In the video piece, one monitor shows the Huangshan mountains from several vantage points during shifting light and weather. The next monitor displays tourists posing for pictures on a scenic overlook, and the third focuses on people in the Huangshan tourism business—including porters, hotel employees, and a local artist—explaining their impressions of the location where they earn a living. Change is a constant: clouds hide the sun, gusts stir branches and ponytails, cell phones ring. Caplan’s video highlights just how disparate experiences of the same spot can be, juxtaposing the magnificent spectacle of towering peaks with the bustle of tourism and the realities of everyday life.

Even Caplan’s still photographs suggest worlds colliding. In the wall-size photomural *Shangri-La* (2013), two roosters pause by a gate before a huge, postcard-pretty panorama of waterfalls and pagodas. *Spectrum* (2013) zeros in on a patch of rainy pavement where a



Lana Z Caplan, *Shangri-La*, mixed media, 100" x 100", Safety NAGA.

yellow ginkgo leaf has landed on the yellow band of an oil slick’s rainbow. The most confounding picture of all, *Tree-Lined* (2013), appears to depict a woody scene with a gash through it. The forest is a fiction, though—a mere printed image on a pair of curtains—and the geometric shard slicing the pastoral landscape turns out to be a sliver of a construction site. Just beyond the scrim of the curtains, the chaotic scene of buildings being erected jostles against a vision of uncorrupted nature as vivid and insubstantial as a dream. —*Joanne Silver*

Sarah Sze

Fabric Workshop and Museum

The Fabric Workshop and Museum’s ca. 1996 left building has long, rectangular spaces that lend themselves beautifully to sprawling, organic installations—such as Sarah Sze’s with olive oil. Philadelphia, she transformed three of its floors into ethereal, multi-dimensional spaces by placing familiar objects and materials in unexpected combinations. In this quietly impressive exhibition, the galleries’ walls and floors remained mostly static elements, offering solid frameworks for the artist’s delicate, like-like compositions.

The installation began on the first floor, where Sze took special liberty by moving a recreation of a—usually located at the entrance to the first gallery—into the center of the room, and illuminated it like a stage set. In the second gallery, she created her own version of the deck, but rather than using wood she reproduced it in her signature style: a cage-like network of thin metal rods intertwined with commonplace objects. (Suzanne, Sze mentioned to play with the idea of the original versus the copy, using the structure to talk to corporate effect. Dishes and rocks that appeared to rest on top of the deck to be fake, formed from Styrofoam and aluminum.) The topography of rock surfaces. Leaving exposed the wall was a patch of pressed bed cushions—these, too, pressed like rocks.

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