

PRESS RELEASE

Zillman Art Museum - University of Maine

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Admission to ZAM is FREE in
2022 thanks to Birchbrook

Zillman Art Museum (ZAM) announces Winter Exhibition

BANGOR – The Zillman Art Museum, located at 40 Harlow Street in downtown Bangor, opened a new exhibition on January 14 that will run through April 30, 2022. ZAM is open Tuesday-Saturday from 10 am - 5 pm and brings modern and contemporary art to the region, presenting approximately 21 original exhibitions each year. Admission to the Zillman Art Museum is free in 2022 thanks to the generosity of Birchbrook.

JEN WINK HAYS: VALLEY LOW

January 14 - April 30, 2022

Valley Low features a selection of paintings and wall-oriented sculptures by Jen Wink Hays who is based in Philadelphia, PA. Hays' paintings are populated by whimsical shapes painted in a hard-edged fashion. Bulging forms that seemingly reference cartoon-like anatomy, chunky bent cylinders and other shapes, evoke forms from both the built and natural world and share space on these canvases. They unite in a sort of organic growth that seemingly emanates from the bottom of the compositions. Hays comments that "the works in *Valley Low* are undeniably upbeat and sunny in appearance yet—as the title suggests—something more psychologically complex and nuanced is at play." While the artist's paintings employ simple, block-like and "almost childlike shapes", her process encompasses multiple steps, both additive and subtractive. Art critic and writer Nico Kos Earle comments that Hays' paintings are built "through a series of increasingly controlled layers" and that the artist's "zoom in, zoom out" approach is also "procedurally connected to our constant toggle between the organic and the synthetic."

The exhibition demonstrates the artist's keen ability to work in all formats and sizes, from works as small as 18 x 24 inches to mammoth paintings that span ten feet. A focal point of the exhibition is the large-scale painting, *Blowback*. The eccentric, stacked shapes appear to originate from the left corner and are created in a most cheerful palette that includes vivid lime green, mustardy yellow, coral, and chromatic grays. In some instances colors shift within the enigmatic forms—the bottom of some flesh-toned forms appear to be dipped in vivid flamingo-pink. Hays confidently integrates flamboyant and under-stated colors in her paintings, reflecting her desire "to negotiate between gaudy and tasteful in my work". Energy and movement are also evident in *Blowback*. The prominent green element that hugs the right side of the "shape pile" seems to cast off an array of eccentric shapes that range from kite-like diamonds and circles to smaller random shards. These forms seem to have been expelled from the larger mass and float on the blue-gray expanse.

As in Hays' paintings, her sculptural works are equally lighthearted. It is as if she plucked a few singular shapes from the canvases and gave them life in three dimension. The quirky sculptures *Bobber 1 & 2* are fashioned from accessible, arguably "low art" materials such as papier mâché and have a playful resonance. In this wall installation *Bobber 1*, a two-toned bumpy shape that brings to mind microscopic cellular material, awkwardly dangles from twisted natural rope, while it's weighty green and charcoal gray companion, *Bobber 2*, hangs alongside.

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JEN WINK HAYS (American, born 1972)

left: *Forecaster's Dilemma*, 2020
Oil on canvas

right: *Blowback*, 2019
Oil on canvas

Both works: Courtesy of the artist