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## FEATURED

### Off-Site: Jodi Hays in Los Angeles

The longtime Nashvillian's first solo show with Night Gallery opens June 25

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*Off-Site is an ongoing series of features about Nashville-based artists whose work is being exhibited elsewhere.*

Jodi Hays has a long history in Nashville, and an even longer history in the South. A native of Hot Springs, Ark., Hays has lived in Nashville since 2005. She spent four years as the gallery director at Tennessee State University, where she brought in art-world heavyweights like William Pope.L, Hank Willis Thomas and Shaun Leonardo. She's exhibited with Red Arrow Gallery and ZieherSmith, and her show at The Browsing Room inside the Downtown Presbyterian Church received a coveted *ArtForum* Critic's Pick.

For *The Find*, her first solo show in Los Angeles, Hays is exhibiting mostly large-scale works that the artist refers to as "backless quilts" — a kind of descriptive shorthand for her unique process.

"*The Find* relates to reclaimed materials and the idea that materials have been taken from Goodwill or recycling bins or hand-me-downs from my family," the artist tells the *Scene* from her home in East Nashville. "But *The Find* is also what an artist practices — a lifetime of searching for something."

Hays began utilizing used cardboard as artistic materials while socially isolating during the COVID pandemic. She arrived at a uniquely Southern aesthetic that references patchwork quilts and abandoned country stores, but also Rauschenberg's "Bed" and Cubist collage. Her artist's statement spells it out: "Landscape and the material vocabulary of the American South influence my abstraction. Mining a Southern povera, I use reclaimed textiles, fabric and cardboard. These materials serve as stand-ins for expressive marks, and resourceful labor."

*The Find* is a big show of big work, and in many ways, Night Gallery is the ideal platform for Hays to increase her visibility. Founded in 2010, the gallery was originally a strip-mall space that was open only from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. In recent years it's developed into one of the West Coast's most influential art spaces, representing an array of powerhouse artists like Samara Golden, Tau Lewis and Jesse Mockrin.

At 46-by-45 inches, "Darkest Hour" is one of the exhibition's midsize collage works, and is made from the waxy dyed cardboard from a mattress box pieced together with pink-hued slabs that look like flesh and worn-out bedsheets.

"Canaan" is one of four 76-by-52-inch works. Its bright-yellow hues are unflinchingly cheery — like an old doll grinning up from a dollar bin. Along its lower edge is a star-shaped doily, the perfect representation for the Southern niceties that persist even in times of desperation — or, as Hays says, a lifetime spent searching. The work takes its title, she says, from the Old Testament promise of a land of milk and honey that took 40 years to find.