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## ART

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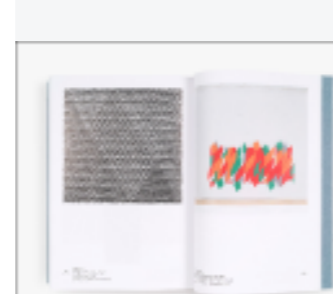
Senga Nengudi with Amadour

I'll See You There  
By Jamieson Webster

## ARTSEEN

Wardell Milan: Bluets & 2 Years of  
Magical Thinking  
By Joel DanilewitzArthur Dove: Sensations of Light  
By Irene Lyla LeeEva Lundsager: Ovation  
By Hovey BrockPhilip Guston Now—A Personal  
Meditation  
By Phong BuiThe Curatorial Imagination of Walter  
Hopps  
By Sandra ZalmanKyle Dunn: Night Pictures  
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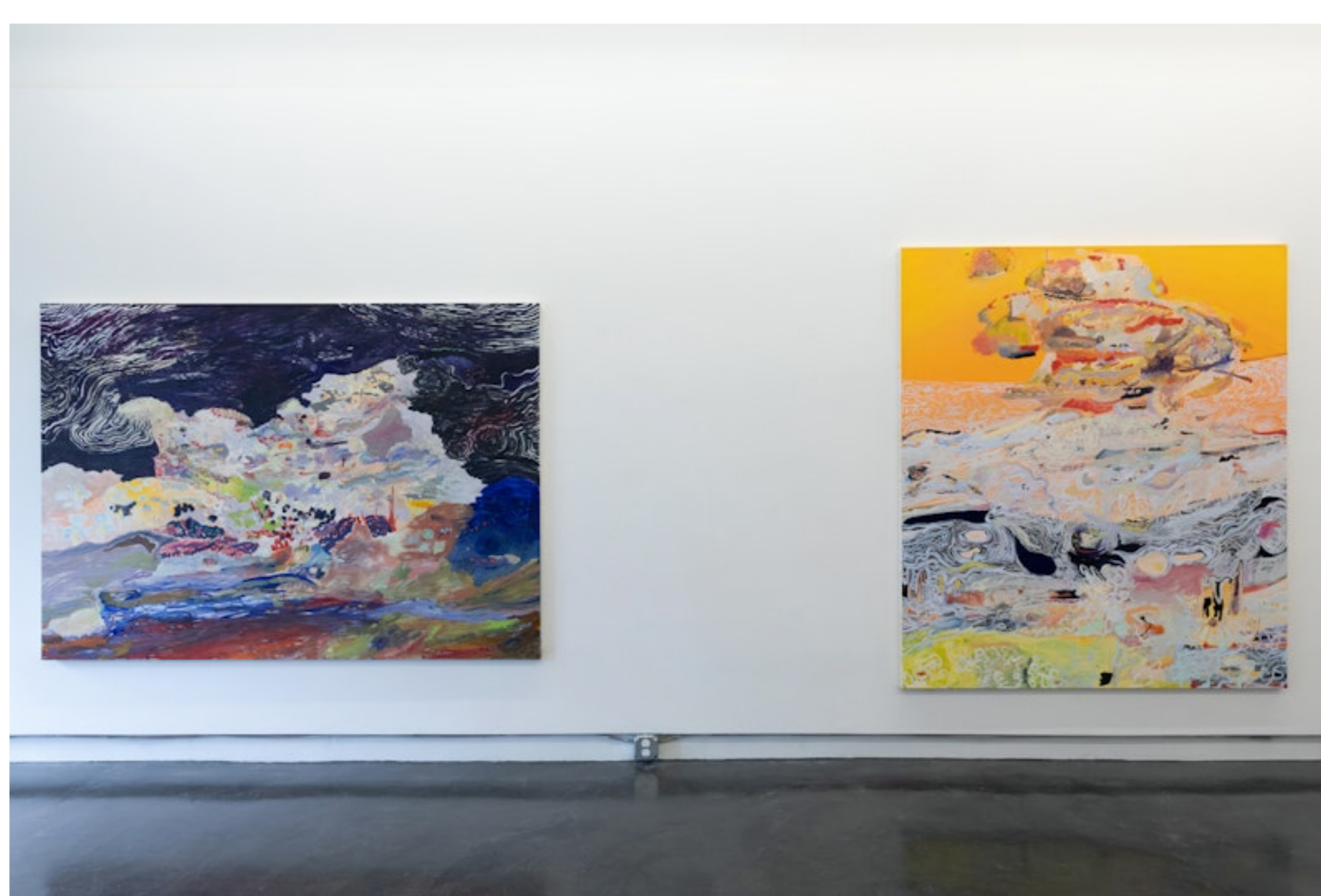
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## ArtSeen

Eva Lundsager: *Ovation*By [Hovey Brock](#)Installation view: *Eva Lundsager: Ovation*, Praise Shadows Art Gallery, Brookline, MA, 2023. Courtesy Praise Shadows.

*Ovation*, a solo show of oil paintings by Eva Lundsager, extends the artist's long-standing investigation of abstract landscape. Over the last thirty years, she has honed her painting language into a polished vocabulary of gestures: drips and pours, wet into wet, calligraphic line, and more. The five large works in the gallery's front room are layered, highly articulated compositions that force the eye to take its time as it journeys across their surfaces. The deliberateness of these paintings is no illusion. Lundsager paints slowly, sometimes spending years to fully realize a canvas. Though vast in scale, these works are not ponderous, crackling as they do with detail and color contrasts. Five smaller paintings in the back room read more like sketches, digestible to the eye in one take. They have wit, charm, and emotional resonance, but lack the monumentality which makes the large paintings so impressive.

Lundsager grew up in rural Maryland and roamed freely through the woods, allowing the landscape to envelop her. Each painting in *Ovation* serves up a taste of the freedom and possibility she experienced in these early wanderings, and memory is the engine that drives her practice. The tip of her brush channels past experiences into thousands of painterly gestures, a condensation of impressions and feelings that give her large paintings such impact. In *As They Have Always Fought Everywhere* (2019), the upper third of the canvas is covered by an ominous, swirling mass of blue/black lines that look like gathering thunderclouds. The energy they radiate brings to mind the charged pastorals of Charles Burchfield, an artist Lundsager admires. In a conversation with the artist about this show, she told me of the lasting impression living in Missouri for a decade had made on her, where sheltering from oncoming tornados was a regular occurrence. The black lines in the painting came in part from her recollections of that time in her life.

Installation view: *Eva Lundsager: Ovation*, Praise Shadows Art Gallery, Brookline, MA, 2023. Courtesy Praise Shadows.

One of the smaller works, *Were Now Like* (2021), has a central element that looks like a head peering over a dune, or maybe an armored tank trundling into the sunset, composed of an accretion of daubs in the moteliest hues—blue, violet, gray, red, orange, and more—all scumbled together. The ground has bravura passages of shimmering wet into wet brushwork. Pink and orange stalagmites, drips of paint spun upside down, crowd the foreground. There is something both comic and disturbing in the image, not unlike the way a Guston painting feels. The tank association may not be so off-base, as Lundsager has written that she chose the titles for the paintings in this show from a book on the Second World War, *History of World War II*, which she discovered by chance shortly after her father died in 2014. It was published in 1945, the year allied forces liberated her father from a Nazi prison camp. A Danish native, he had been arrested in 1944 for spreading underground publications as part of the resistance. The book served as a bridge to an episode of her father's life whose traumatic events Lundsager never knew in detail, and *Ovation* is a tribute to his memory.

Installation view: *Eva Lundsager: Ovation*, Praise Shadows Art Gallery, Brookline, MA, 2023. Courtesy Praise Shadows.

In another large painting, *Under Constant Still* (2021), a horizon line hugs the bottom quarter of the canvas, while a vast sky soars above it, made all the more sweeping by the vertical reach of the support. In the upper left quadrant, a triangular Prussian blue splotch whose hue echoes the dark tones of the horizon reads both as a shape and a gap in the composition, even as it somehow remains integrated in the whole. Its undefined nature makes it a focal point the eye returns to again and again after investigating other parts of the painting. The indeterminacy of this form is also what makes this painting especially moving as the eye struggles to resolve the role of the blue triangle in the overall composition. The rest of the painting comes alive as other passages shift in relation to its uncertainty, and then shift again on subsequent readings. The image comes apart and then reassembles in a seesaw between dissolution and resolution. This dynamism manifests in all Lundsager's large works. Her willingness to risk pushing her compositions to the edge of incoherence makes spaces that pull the viewer into a visual dialogue rooted in ambiguity.

## Contributor

**Hovey Brock**

**Hovey Brock** is an artist and has an MFA from the School of Visual Arts Art Practice program. He is a frequent contributor to Artseen.

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