

Adams and Ollman

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Adams and Ollman
418 NW 8th Avenue
Portland, Oregon
503.724.0684
adamsandollman.com

For inquiries: info@adamsandollman.com

Joan Nelson: New Works
at Adams and Ollman
April 6—May 4, 2024
Opening Reception: Saturday, April 6 from 3—5pm

Adams and Ollman is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by Joan Nelson, her fourth with the gallery. On view will be a group of new mixed media paintings that depict fantastical landscapes in flux and imbued with a powerful animistic energy. The exhibition opens with a reception on Saturday, April 6 from 3–5pm and is on view through May 4, 2024.

Nelson employs a painterly maximalism to conjure landforms, skies, and seas that are sublime and surreal, and touch on key themes of feminism, spiritualism, science fiction, and the environment. The landscapes she paints are familiar yet mysterious—they might be pre-human or post-apocalyptic, or another planet altogether. Employing a rich palette of paint, glitter, ink, glass beads, and sometimes even mascara, Nelson conjures luminous jewel-toned mountain ranges, craggy inland sea stacks, and towering, figurative basalt columns set against rich, effervescent skies that appear to be evolving before our eyes. Ebullient rainbows form a ring around an active volcano, itself an island nestled into the caldera of some larger landform, spewing water into the air which collects into surrounding pools and flows gently out of sight. A mysterious confluence of elements—marshy islands floating amongst veils of fog and water, gravity defying waterfalls, delicate, lacy clouds, cellular waterspouts, and errant comets—all coalesce to form worlds that are potent in their desire to become and free to create their own narrative or destiny.

At times, elements of the styles of the Hudson River School and the German Romantic paintings of the 19th and 20th centuries, with their sweeping panoramas and dramatic light and color, find their way into Nelson's worlds. Rather than confining the natural beauty of the landscape to the service of national pride, or as an object of conquest, Nelson re-



imagines and re-appropriates these qualities in a liberatory aesthetic coup. Nelson's deft hand reveals a world where reality is unfixed, possibly multitudinous, a collective hallucination sited at a nexus of fantasy, memory, and sensation. In each painting, the viewer is given a glimpse into worlds that are sentient and powerful, enthralled in a cycle of creation, powerful and free to assert themselves in all their wonder.

Nelson's paintings invite, among other things, a feeling of surrender. In a 2021 interview Nelson said, "I'll never be able to replicate the magic that happens when I feel that nearly nauseous feeling from extreme beauty. I force myself to put the reference away and jump over the cliff at some point and rely only on my imagination for better or worse." Her own surrender to the process in a sense gives the image, the land she is creating, permission to become on its own terms. In this way, Nelson's paintings reclaim the trope of the land as an embodiment of the feminine, from that of an object of desire and domination, trapped in a colonizing, romanticizing gaze, to that of an eternal feminine, subject of creational force, enduring, powerful, unbound to external will, place, or time. Nelson's wild imaginings invite the viewer to consider how land might be thought of as alive and in its own ecstatic process of self-actualization.

Joan Nelson (b. 1958, California; lives and works in Stamford, NY) has exhibited her work at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Solomon R.

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Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, PA; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX; Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA; among many others. Her work is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and Whitney Museum of American Art, all New York, NY; Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Minneapolis Museum of Art, MN; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington D.C.; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH; and Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, University of Texas at Austin, TX. Nelson received her BFA from Washington University, St. Louis, MO. In 2023, she received a Guggenheim Fellowship.

Joan Nelson

Untitled, 2024

acrylic paint, inks, glitter, acrylic beads and flocking on board
20 x 20 in