

rachel uffner

ARTFORUM

Shara Hughes

MARLBOROUGH CHELSEA
545 West 25th Street
February 11–March 12

Shara Hughes's imagination yields rich, weird stuff. In earlier works, sundry abstract and natural forms are pushed through open-ended narratives within vibrant domestic spaces. In these dozen or so newer paintings, her psyche decides to peer out the living room window so that we can be made privy to an assortment of breezy and prismatic landscapes that plumb the depths of her idiosyncratic interior and exterior world views.

Hughes deftly combines the richly saturated palettes of the early Impressionists with the darker psychological tones of more recent picture-makers such as Forrest Bess, Philip Guston, and Dana Schutz. The artist divides a number of her canvases into compartments, making the images she foregrounds contrast quite sharply with the illusionistic depths of their backgrounds. A beautiful example of this is the hot-hued *Split Ends*, 2016, which is cut through the center by a tree trunk whose russet- and ocher-striped roots and branches create two windows that lead us down a path of bold red and orange fields illuminated by a blue-dappled sky. In *Eye of the Swell*, 2016, tall waves lap surrealistically around three central oases; and in *Mushroom Hunt*, 2015, a sun-soaked beach is viewed through a brown and sap-green forest. Like a byway through fractured layers of consciousness, Hughes's vivid paintings marry apperception with fictional time and space—a rabbit hole that, truth be told, one is extraordinarily reluctant to escape.



Shara Hughes, *Split Ends*, 2016, oil, flashe, and acrylic on canvas, 68 x 60".

— Anne Prentnieks

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