

W.A.S. HATCH
INTRODUCTION TO *CLOSE TO HOME*

CHASE DOUGHERTY, GRETCHEN HUPFEL CURATOR
OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Entering the Hatch home produces an immediate sense of comfort and family. Bold colors and patterns decorate the furnishings and a bright mural, by Hatch herself, lines the wall of the entrance hall. Exploring this personal space is an invitation into the Hatch's family history, generating a sense of both warmth and wonder. Ascending the stairs to Hatch's third-floor studio offers a glimpse into the scenes that have inspired Hatch throughout her career; the light that shines through a tree from a nearby window, photos of her smiling family, and the many objects that have culminated into her stunning still lifes. All of which are inherently intertwined throughout Hatch's career-spanning work, defining her experimental and innovative artistic spirit.

The Hatch house mirrors the expressive nature of her current body of work, a selection of which makes up this exhibition. The intimacy of domestic life mixes with elements of the natural world to construct landscapes that are inviting, yet magically foreign. Although the scenes are sometimes familiar, their distortion is revealed through illustrative colors and bold brushstrokes. The multifaceted quality of the work feels like a departure from Hatch's previous endeavors, namely her masterful printmaking and lithe watercolors. However, the collage aspect that characterizes her previous practices becomes apparent as a throughline to her current acrylic works.

When considering Hatch's enduring career as a visual artist, her achievements in adaptability and investigation most readily emerge. As a trained printmaker, Hatch pushed the boundaries of composition and content past previously considered notions of form. She then stretched her artistic horizons into watercolors, embarking into an entirely different medium by which Hatch transformed her practice through paint. Her natural inclination towards experimentation led her

to her most recent medium—acrylic. Although each of these materials is unique in their application and overall aesthetic, Hatch's explorations have enabled her to continue showcasing her content in unique and effective ways that are truly her own. The materials and practice have evolved, yet her approach to collaging her compositions has endured.

At first glance, the selected works imbue reality. However, the collaged elements that were so typical of Hatch's formal printmaking practice make their debut in this current artistic process. Hatch uses her personal photographs of her surroundings, many of which are familiar places, as the basis for her final, painted compositions. These photographs are then cut up and pieced back together to frame the many elements that construct the final composition. This fragmented "sketch" is then used as the blueprint that directs the resulting large-scale works. Hatch's technique of utilizing her immediate surroundings can be seen throughout the body of work, such as the reflected light shining in *Brandywine Blue*, or the meticulous forms of Longwood Gardens found in *Yellow Topiary*.

This practice allows Hatch the ability to construct her favored assemblage into a newly imagined landscape; one that suggests reality, but actualizes a manufactured scene brimming with Hatch's expressive brushstroke and lush color palette. Each painted scene encapsulates a multitude of moments, inspired by the aesthetic quality of our natural world. Hatch craftily collects these snapshots as a means throughout her process to ultimately capture the essence of the space, the time, the sensation.

Anticipation

2013

Acrylic on canvas

36 × 24 inches

photo collage study below

As a recent admirer of Hatch's work, I was struck by the variety of subject matter she has explored through her unique artistic practice. Although the selection of work for *Close to Home* presents Hatch's most recent body of work, it additionally attempts to showcase this variety. While in conversation with Hatch, the fundamental inspirations for her work became apparent. Scenes of her family such as *Meredith & Charlotte* and *Erica* provide glimpses into the intimate moments of her life, while *Night Mystery* and *Blue Lagoon* express her inquisitive examinations of scenery and space. Hatch seamlessly traverses between moments of fascination with the outside world and personal memories as a visual author, documenting her artistic curiosities while examining herself within those larger moments.

Within this survey of versatility, Hatch effectively demonstrates her continued innovation as an experimental artist. While the concept varies, each work invites the viewer to further examine the nuances of her stylistic explorations. The distinctions reveal themselves through color divergence, contrasting compositions, and light studies. This initial invitation to look closer at the work is a reflection of Hatch herself. Upon first introductions, Hatch's gentle personality and warmth reveal themselves to be the foundation of her resulting energetic artistic style. As if her work articulates an inner expression of herself that would otherwise be unattainable.

This inner expression has evolved throughout her career, and with this body of work, posits Hatch as not only a contemporary master of her unique style, but showcases her success as an explorer of materials and processes. This is not a retrospective of Hatch's work, but rather a presentation of another chapter of Hatch's accomplishments in examination, tactful process, and imagination.

