

*Jordan Casteel: Field of view* brings together twenty-five paintings spanning the past decade of the artist's practice. For me, this period is significant, as it roughly corresponds to both the time I've known Casteel and her work, and a large part of my curatorial career. As our careers have developed in tandem, I've relished opportunities to write about her work and collaborate with her on exhibitions and acquisitions. This felt top of mind when I was asked to work on this exhibition for the Hill Art Foundation. Casteel and I were given an open brief and the space and support to develop a project in whatever shape we felt made sense. What quickly emerged was the idea of presenting an exhibition of Casteel's paintings in a way that offers a fresh perspective on her evolution, including her taking on of different subjects and landscapes, while also acknowledging her consistent commitment to an observational practice.

Casteel paints her surroundings. Her paintings are portraits of people, places, and items that hold a particular significance for her, from friends and community members, to street tableaux that catch her eye while walking in Harlem, to the flowers that she plants and grows in her garden in upstate New York. But more than representing particular people and landscapes, the portraits are also markers of time. They give small glimpses into the artist's life at the moments of their creation.

The works in *Field of view* were painted over the last ten years, a period that has been marked by significant world events, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. Though Casteel doesn't make work that is specifically about those (or any) events or movements, their presence is felt in her paintings. Take *Harlem Public* (2021). At first glance, it's a Harlem streetscape, depicting a local restaurant. We see a storefront with a chalkboard in front, and various signs in the windows and on the door. Upon closer look, however, we notice a chalkboard sign clarifying that the restaurant is only open for delivery and takeout and requires masks at all times. We see that two of the signs that adorn the front of the eatery are thanking New Yorkers and celebrating first responders. It is clear that this work was made during a time when New York, like most of the world, was dealing with the pandemic crisis. *Harlem*

*Public* represents both Casteel's continued explorations and paintings of Harlem, and a resilient city—a moment when everyone was adapting to a new normal.

Casteel has been marking moments in her works for many years. *Jared* (2016) was made while she was in residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem, and it shows the Museum's building in the background. *Jared* is an indicator of a particular moment not only because that building no longer exists as rendered, but also because of the sign proclaiming "I can't breathe" in a window. This phrase, among the last words of Eric Garner, an unarmed Black man who was killed by New York police officers in 2014, became one of the slogans of the Black Lives Matter movement. Casteel's deliberate inclusion of it in a painting of a young Black skateboarder not only bears witness to Jared's presence in Harlem in 2016, but also acknowledges those who are no longer with us due to acts of police brutality and violence.

A more recent work, *Field Balm* (2022), is another subtle marker of a moment. In it, we see the artist's lower legs and gardening-clog-clad feet near her garden in her home upstate. *Field Balm* not only depicts her lush surroundings, but also calls attention to the Black Lives Matter movement via a charm inserted into the top of one of the clogs. An ever-present reminder.

Many such connections, both environmental and psychological, link the works in *Field of view*. As we have conceived it, the exhibition is meant to be a conversation among works created years apart and in different locations, allowing for the amplification of the artist's unique style and unified vision. Despite changes in the people and places in her paintings, consistent formal and thematic through lines persist, particularly in the depictions of textures and textiles, bold color palette, and compositional symmetries between bodies and the landscapes they exist in.

In photography, "field of view" refers to what is visible through the camera's viewfinder; more broadly, it denotes the observable space seen with our eyes. As the title of this exhibition, it references Casteel's process of photographing her subjects before painting

and highlights her perspective and undeniable presence in each work. *Field of view*, the show, offers an intimate experience—one that is meant to echo the approachable nature of Casteel’s paintings and practice.

Much as subject and site are important factors in Casteel’s practice, the location of the Hill Art Foundation was key in our organizing of this exhibition. While the selected works showcase various facets of the artist’s practice, within the unique setting of the Hill Art Foundation, they provide an opportunity to consider sites within sites. The galleries overlook the High Line and the streets of Chelsea, and thus for *Field of view*, the view from the floor-to-ceiling windows is both a backdrop for the works and a reflection of the places depicted therein. The scenography nods to the artist’s studio in upstate New York via the Batsheva Hay furniture, the vintage rugs (sourced directly by Casteel), and the visitor’s ability to look outside via large windows. These elements are also meant to reflect the comfort and rootedness that Casteel experiences in her studio, and to offer moments of rest within the gallery space.