

VOGUE

Artist Jordan Casteel’s “Best Show Yet” Pairs Her Richly Patterned Paintings With Batsheva Hay’s Madcap Furniture

By Stephanie Sporn
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Jordan Casteel: “Field of View.” Hill Art Foundation, September 13–November 23. © Hill Art Foundation. Photo: Dan Bradica Studio

For artist Jordan Casteel and fashion designer Batsheva Hay, it was love at first sight. While their husbands, both photographers, had been close for years, the two women struck up a friendship of their own during the early days of the pandemic, when the Denver-born, New York-based painter was hunting for her wedding dress. “I knew I didn’t want to wear a white dress. I wanted to wear something fun, playful, and representative of me,” says Casteel. After

the artist's now husband, David Schulze, recommended Hay, known for her flouncy, printed frocks, the designer wound up making Casteel two wedding dresses: one of blue and yellow wax-print fabric and the other of red moiré.

“Batsheva and I are both very interested in color and pattern and the way that our work can activate spaces and bodies. There’s a real playfulness in her clothing that I’m similarly interested in in the context of my work,” says Casteel. Known for portraits and paintings that Hay describes as “earnest, bright, and interesting,” Casteel has a knack for rendering patterns and textures—think heavily impastoed shearling coats and iridescent rubber Wellies you can almost hear squeaking. Like Hay, the artist delights in unexpected color combinations, often replacing her sitters’ natural skin tones with shades of red, green, and purple.



Batsheva Hay and Jordan Casteel at the opening of “Jordan Casteel: Field of View.” Courtesy Hill Art Foundation. Photo: Liz Ligon

Over the years, Casteel’s practice has expanded to encompass city scenes, landscapes, and still lifes, reflecting her move from Harlem to upstate New York in 2021, though no matter the subject, her brilliant mark making remains incredibly consistent. Through November 23, the Hill Art Foundation in Chelsea is presenting “Jordan Casteel: Field of View,” a solo exhibition featuring 25 works spanning the last decade of her career. Curated by Lauren Haynes, head curator at Governors Island Arts and vice president for arts and culture at the Trust for

Governors Island in New York City, the show includes important loans alongside four monumental portraits from the collection of J. Tomilson Hill, the nonprofit organization's founder. (Two of these portraits are promised gifts to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.)

While the show's title, "Field of View," references Casteel's process of photographing her sitters prior to painting them, it also sets the tone for what is arguably the artist's most personal show to date. "My mom sent me a text saying, 'I don't know about you, but I think this is your best show yet.' There's an element of that that I completely agree with," says Casteel. "This show feels so of me, and the way that I engage with my work on a day-to-day basis. It's the crux of how I feel when making these paintings and experiencing them when they're all together. It's the full embodiment of me in the practice."



Jordan Casteel, *Medinilla, Wanda and Annelise*, 2019. Oil on canvas, 96 × 78 inches (243.8 × 198.1 cm). © Jordan Casteel.



Jordan Casteel, Charles, 2016. Oil on canvas, 78 × 60 inches (198.1 × 152.4 cm). © Jordan Casteel.
Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan Gallery. Photo: Adam Reich

Part of Casteel's vision for the exhibition was to subtly integrate the look and feel of her studio, which includes a lot of natural wood and one of Hay's whimsically reupholstered vintage chairs. (She even picked fresh-cut flowers from her "epic" garden upstate to display during the show's opening week.) Sprinkled throughout "Field of View" are several of the designer's funky furnishings—including a chair plucked from her own apartment—sitting atop vintage rugs.



Jordan Casteel: "Field of View." Hill Art Foundation, September 13–November 23. © Hill Art Foundation. Photo: Dan Bradica Studio



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"It's rare to have that very unpretentious love and support going on between people," says Hay, describing her admiration for Casteel as an artist, friend, and collaborator. "The fact that our work actually fits together and that it can be displayed side by side is a dream."

Indeed, Hay's vividly patterned pieces seamlessly complement Casteel's paintings, all of which lend a certain hominess to the ultramodern Peter Marino–designed building. "It invites time when you have furniture in the space," adds the artist, who encourages visitors to take a seat.

The floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking Tenth Avenue and the High Line, meanwhile, enliven the space in other ways. "What's really exciting for me is the way that the windows and furniture create a very specific conversation, both interior and exterior, around the paintings," says Casteel. She points to a work like *Peak Summer*, whose vibrant orange and green vegetation "reverberates off the wall," especially when juxtaposed with the surrounding High Line gardens and metallic cityscape.



Jordan Casteel, Peak Summer, 2024. Oil on canvas, 50 × 40 inches (127 × 101.6 cm). © Jordan Casteel. Collection of Lisa Goldberg and Danny Goldberg OAM., Sydney, Australia. Photo: David Schulze



Jordan Casteel, *Amina*, 2017. Oil on canvas, 90 × 78 inches (228.6 × 198.1 cm). © Jordan Casteel.
Rennie Collection, Vancouver. Photo: Jason Wyche

Elsewhere in the show, slices of Casteel's cosmopolitan life in Harlem are juxtaposed with zen moments in nature. On the second floor of the show, *Grief/Spring* (2024), a 12-by-9-inch still life of daffodils in a vase, is the sole work in a gallery alcove, allowing for an intimate viewing moment. Then, turning around, the visitor encounters two paintings at 6 and 7 feet tall, respectively: *Jared* (2016), a portrait of a young man sitting on a skateboard, and *Amina* (2017), showing the ad-filled windows of a hair-braiding salon. "The three works reconcile with this voyeuristic, moody scene," says Casteel, who believes that all the show's paintings could be considered portraits—whether they appear that way or not. The common thread is the way she approaches a subject: "A city-street ice machine in front of my bodega in Harlem caught my attention in the same way that the nasturtium flowers with the light hitting them does," she says, referring to *ICE* (2018) and *Nasturtium* (2021). "What feeds me creatively is just being an observational person in the world and capturing moments of time and curiosities."

Coinciding with New York Fashion Week and the post-Armory Week flurry of gallery openings, Casteel's exhibition is as much a lesson in thoughtful collaboration as it is in slowing down.

Stephanie is an arts and culture journalist and independent dress historian based in New York City. Specializing in the intersection of art, style, and design, she especially loves writing about fashion in portraiture, genre-defying exhibitions, and makers with a strong reverence for the past.