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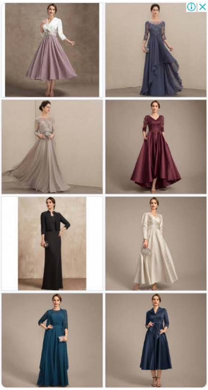
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Art

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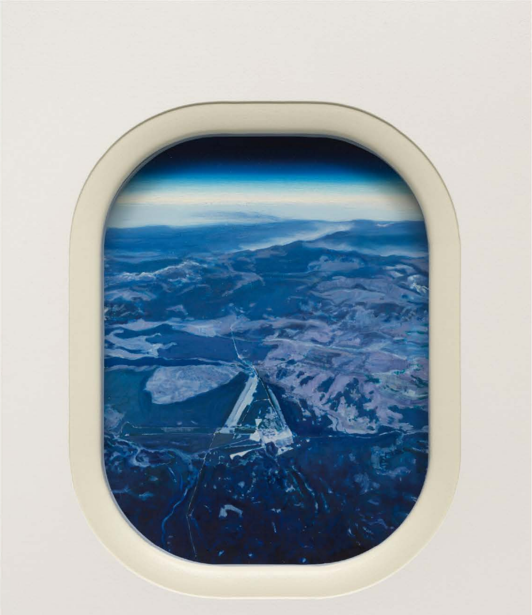
Through a Boeing 737 Window, Leslie Wayne Frames the Grandeur of the American West

JUNE 28, 2024

GRACE EBERT



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A Sprawling Nest of Vintage

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The German word *heimat* roughly translates to the web of ideas and feelings associated with home and the land we occupy. During a flight across the Rocky Mountains and Cascade Range in 2021, the concept was front and center for artist Leslie Wayne as she peered down through the small airplane window at the massive expanses below.

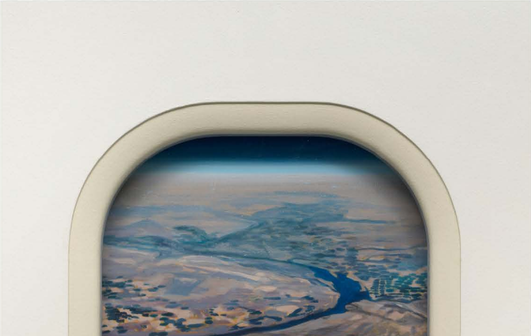
Raised in the American West and based in Manhattan since 1982, Wayne is interested in how home, terrain, and memory inform one another. She elaborates:

> My own experience of [*heimat*] has always been tied to the dry, scrubby hills of Santa Barbara and Laguna, where I honed my skills as a young plein-air landscape painter intent on observation and fidelity. Only when I moved East in my late 20s did my relationship to that landscape begin to shift into something much deeper and more complex.

This particular flight sparked questions about settlement and the nefarious roots of Manifest Destiny, and the artist began snapping photos of the patchworked fields, arid ridges, and mountains below. Those images became the basis for a compelling series of 36 small oil paintings on paper framed by a rendition of a Boeing 737 window.

Her first observational compositions in about 20 years, the works comprise a series titled *This Land is Your Land*, which references the iconic Woody Guthrie song criticizing the notion of land ownership. Framed through an entirely modern invention, the tiny, yet grand scenes are timeless in their beauty, reflecting on the imprints of our lives and the legacies we leave behind. "I moved from fidelity to the photographs to an approximation of my experience through the artifice of the work…replicating that sense of wonder and awe that only a view from above can give us— a moment of transcendence beyond the cacophony of our everyday lives," she adds.

This Land is Your Land is on view as part of Wayne's solo show through August 2 at Jack Shainman Gallery in New York. Find more from the artist on her website.



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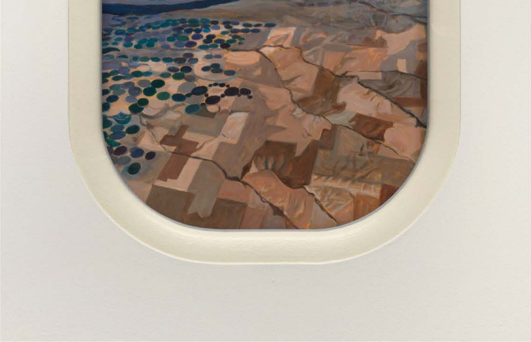

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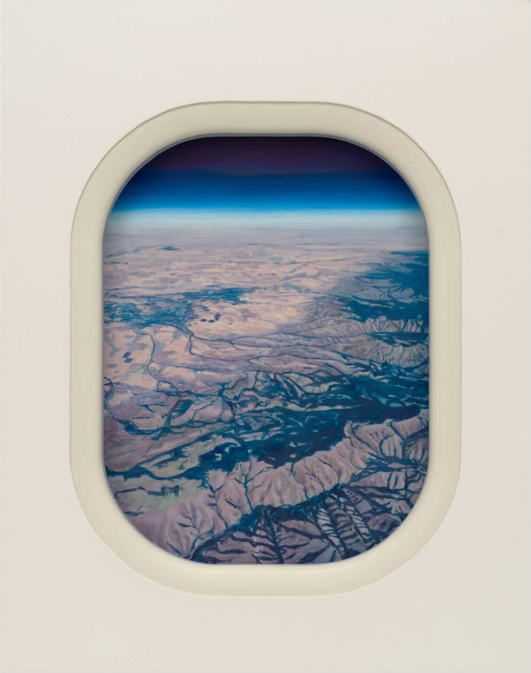

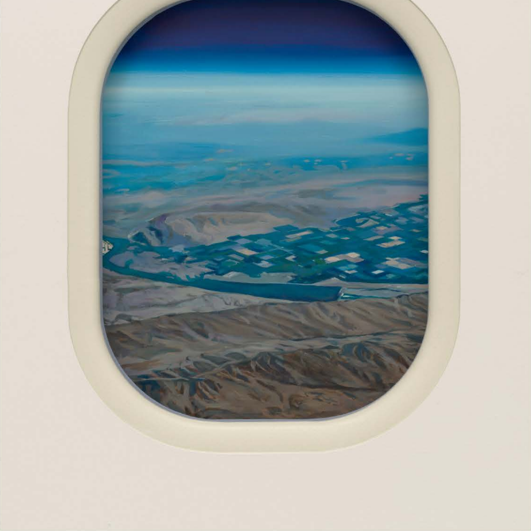

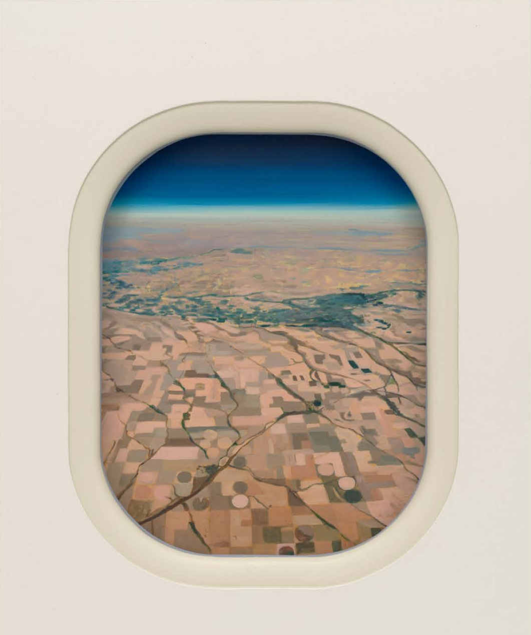

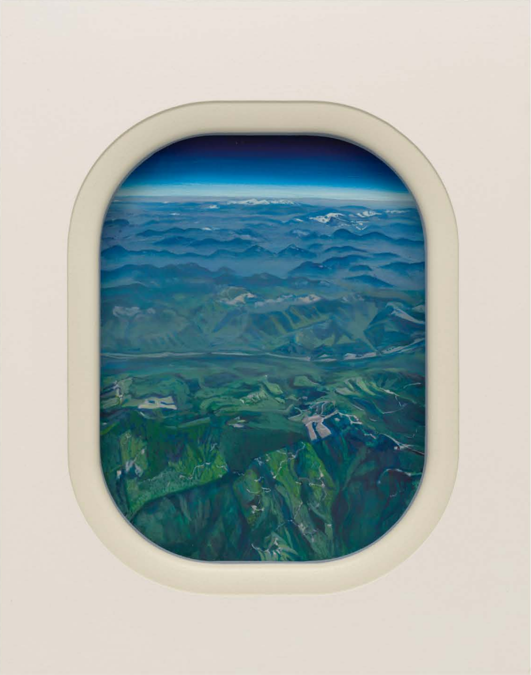

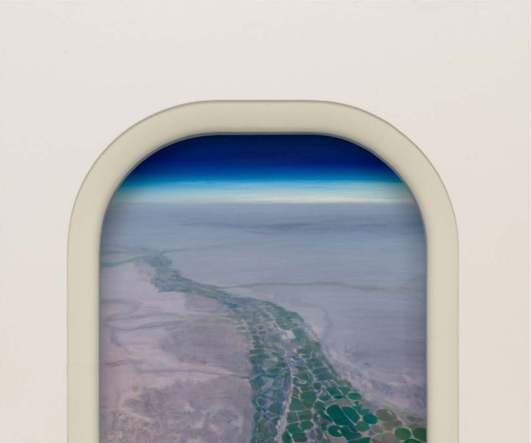

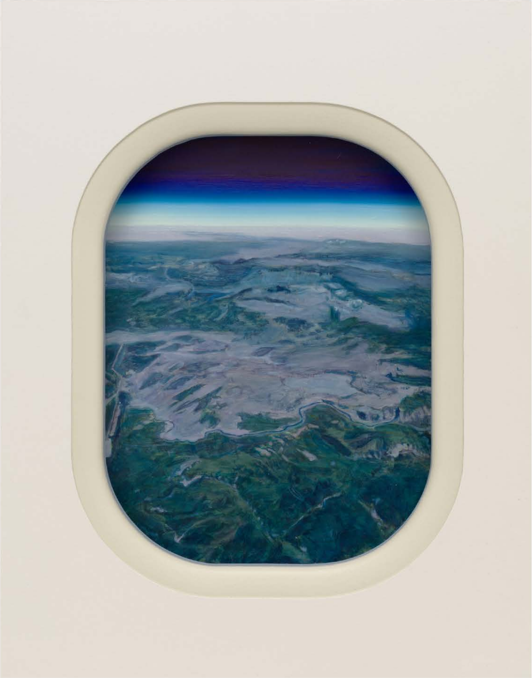

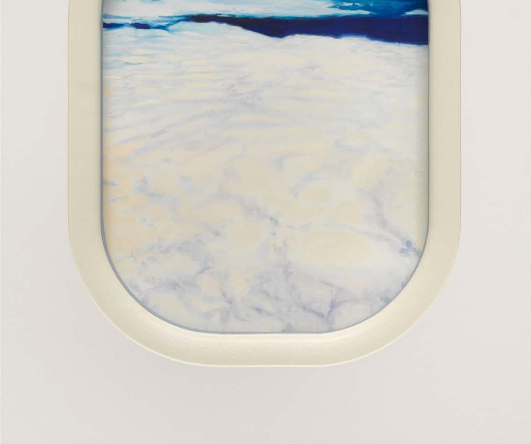

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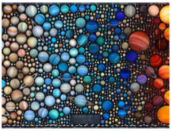

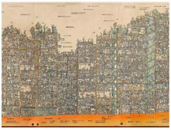

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