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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now

Our planet will never avoid eco-disaster unless consumers start buying less stuff and reusing the stuff we have. "A Ball Is for Throwing," Canada's solo show by the Vancouver painter Elizabeth McIntosh, can be read as providing a kind of picture, much abstracted, of what a world of reuse might look like. Its nine paintings are assembled from existing parts, like those stylishly "green" outfits that get re-cut and resewn from earlier fashion mistakes.

McIntosh's "Curious Trees" features a single arboreal form presented in double, once in royal blue, and again, a few feet to the right, in shocking pink. Its image seems repurposed from some other place in our commodity culture where it was turned out in several colorways. Behind those trees sits hurricane fencing: Telltale breaks in the pattern tell us that, at some point, the image of that fence was crudely cut-and-pasted together in a computer before McIntosh transposed it into art.

Like almost all the paintings at Canada, including "Notes," "Inside a Picture" and "Sappho's World," "Curious Trees" encloses its imagery inside the crude outline of an open book. That adds to the impression that we're encountering McIntosh's subjects (trees and a fence; a cute dog; yellow sticky-notes) at second hand — not out in the world, but as mere pictures such as ones you'd find on a page.



Elizabeth McIntosh's "Curious Trees" (2022) in her solo show "A Ball Is for Throwing," at Canada.
Credit...Elizabeth McIntosh/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; via Canada

Could it be that these paintings imagine a world where the Land's End catalog still exists for us to delight in, but no longer points to stuff we buy?