

ELEANOR RAY: SUGGESTING PARADISE AT THE HOLLYWOOD ROOSEVELT

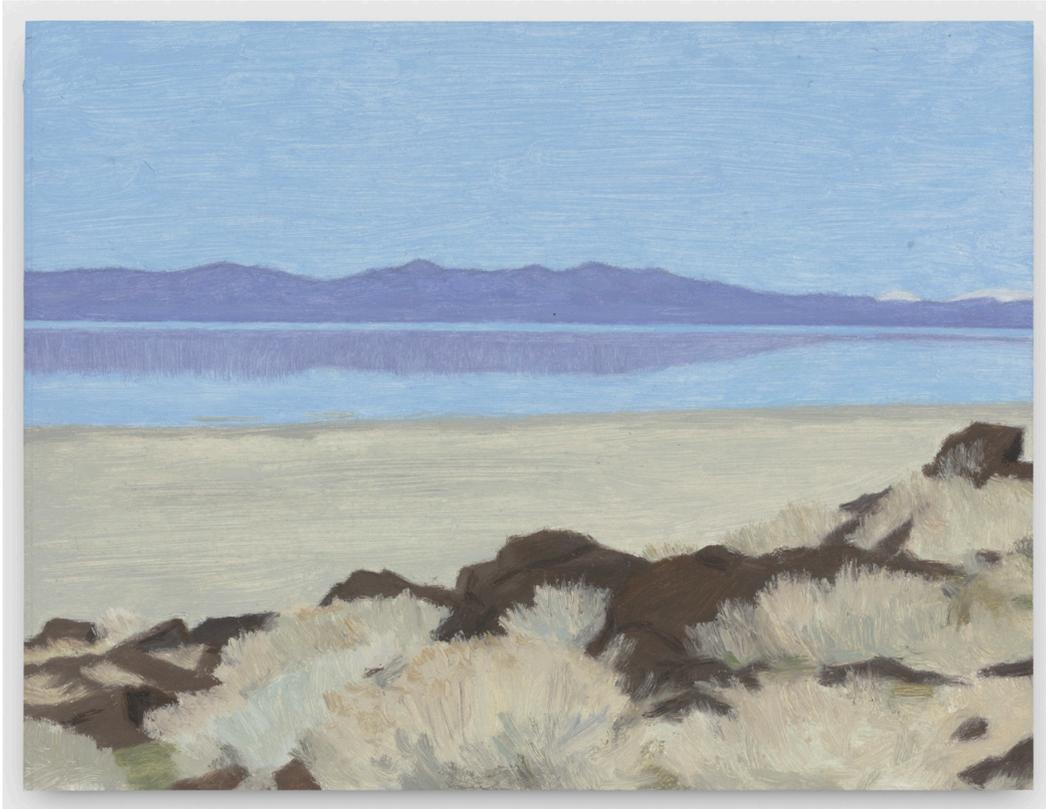
PAUL MAZIAR | FEBRUARY 18, 2020



Eleanor Ray, *Blue Sheet*, oil on panel, 6 x 8 inches, 2019 (courtesy of Nicelle Beauchene Gallery).

The art world landed in L.A. this past weekend for Frieze Los Angeles, joined by several other fairs and occasioning numerous openings — way too much to see if you're into the rapturous experience of long-looking. So instead, we opted for a quixotic trip of finding, and looking deeply into, four works from one painter, Eleanor Ray, on view with Nicelle Beauchene's gallery at the Felix Fair in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel.

After twisting through miles of traffic and waiting in what felt like an hour-long concert line, we finally saw Ray's tiny panel paintings up close. Felix's labyrinthine layout and swarming crowds challenged contemplation, its displays in cramped rooms rather a disservice to what was on view. But Beauchene's chamber was the most exquisitely presented, attractive showing at Felix, and a necessary break from the hubbub.



Eleanor Ray, *Salt Lake Edge*, oil on panel, 6 x 8 inches, 2019 (courtesy of Nicelle Beauchene Gallery).

In that diminutive Hollywood Roosevelt hotel room, painter Eleanor Ray's visionary landscapes brought a total calm. Her pale or cobalt blues and tawnier hues invoke the occult, in the sense of unseen spaces of sky and the tranquil, unenclosed lands that affect the mind in profound ways. These four paintings turned out to be perfect for the forced attention that the barn-burner demanded.

The experience reminded us of a Simone Weil quotation that Ray sent via email last fall: "In the inner life, time takes the place of space." But in that room, it was paint that replaced space. Ray's works are moving and otherworldly, depicting earthly sites such as Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* in the Great Salt Lakes.

But beyond the satisfaction of recognizing the specific, actual sites the works depict, the paintings each have the power to become the room you're in, akin to the familiar cognitive absorption of watching a film. Looking into Ray's little panels is as good as any moving picture. On the 11th floor at the Hollywood Roosevelt, I shut the world out for a few brief minutes and became instead a guest of the heavenly space that Eleanor Ray made up.