



THE NEW YORKER

Goings on About Town

Art

Olive Ayhens

If the American modernist Florine Stettheimer had crossed paths with Greta Thunberg, her paintings might resemble the colorful, composite works of this Brooklyn-based artist, who brings a charmer’s touch to climate concerns. Ayhens has been working (mostly under the radar) since the nineteen-seventies, when the American Pattern and Decoration movement held sway; its influence lingers in her recent kaleidoscopic paintings, where whimsy tends to outstrip dread. In “Camelid in the City,” a prehistoric mammal perches on the banks of the East River, which is rendered as a flurry of acid greens; the camel’s yellow-and-orange hide echoes the glinting lights of the Manhattan skyline in the distance. Ayhens favors pictorial games in which interiors and exteriors flip; in the captivating watercolor “Downstairs Deluge”—an endearingly wobbly grid made of bridges and buildings, rippling currents and clouds—it’s hard to tell whether the surging water flanking a skyscraper is reflected in its glass façade or flooding its floors.

— *Andrea K. Scott*

Through Dec. 20.

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