

# The NEW YORK Sun

Mario Naves | Apr 5, 2024



Olive Ayhens, *Amphibian Emergency*, 2008, Oil on canvas, 62 x 81 inches.

“The aesthetics of pollution” is the stated subject of a show at Bookstein Projects, “Olive Ayhens: Metabolic Metropolis.” Spanning almost 30 years, this array of oil paintings and watercolors showcases an artist of deeply held convictions and unapologetic eccentricity. Her teetering vistas of “urban strata” can be whimsical in character: “From Empire State” (2002) channels Paul Klee and Saul Steinberg to lighthearted effect. Yet Ms. Ayhens also has the capacity to unnerve.

What to make, for instance, of the abrupt mash-up of modernist architecture, divergent landscapes, and frogs — lots of frogs — in “Amphibian Emergency” (2008)? A current of environmental alarm is both amplified and mitigated by Ms. Ayhens’ knack for the telling detail, her nifty brushwork, and a consummate deployment of warm and cool tonalities.

Heir to the American strain of idiosyncratic visionaries, Ms. Ayhens is a link in a chain that includes Albert Pinkham Ryder, Louis Eilshemius and Florine Stettheimer. That’s not bad company to keep. Ms. Ayhens’ art is unstoppable.

‘Olive Ayhens: Metabolic Metropolis’  
Bookstein Projects, 39 E. 78th St., 4th Floor  
Until April 12

Naves, Mario. “Works of George McNeil, an Underappreciated Hometown Boy, Highlight a Healthy Gallery Season ” The New York Sun, Apr 5, 2024. <https://www.nysun.com/article/works-of-george-mcneil-an-underappreciated-hometown-boy-highlight-a-healthy-gallery-season>