

**LLOYD
HAMROL /
JOAN
PERLMAN:**
*“a sky in the
palm of a
hand”*

For the Viewer...

*...For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.*
Wallace Stevens, “The Snow Man”

“One must have a mind of winter / To regard the frost and boughs,” writes Wallace Stevens in his famous poem “The Snow Man.” As a snowman, a viewer could behold nature—a wintry landscape—without bias or preference and unencumbered by expectation. Let us take this advice when regarding the supple, sculptural installations of Lloyd Hamrol and the cool, abstract paintings of Joan Perlman in their joint exhibition. In entirely different ways, their works are very much about materials and processes conjured from notions of the landscape.

Hamrol’s works are two: an 8-foot wall piece and a 20-foot floor installation, both made with many large circular units (70 and 62 inches in diameter, respectively, and one inch thick) of industrial, burnt umber-colored felt. While this material is made to be functional and often times unseen in its application, here, its raw elegance is revealed. The felt circles are beautiful. They are made of 55% wool, speckled with pieces of straw and other natural matter and smell faintly of sheep. Industrial felt is a machine made product of both synthetic fibers and wool, but felt making is a very old process originating with nomadic Asiatic tribes and made with all kinds of animal coats, from sheep’s fleece to camel hair. Unlike weaving, where wool is spun



into threads to create a geometric grid of fabric, felt is made with fibers that are pulled, shredded, matted, layered, rolled, wetted, steamed, and compressed into a thick, dense, water-resistant material. Felt making is loosely analogous to the natural process where layers of mud, when subjected to movement, flooding, and pressure, slowly become shale.

Hamrol's loamy plates overlay one another and produce an undulating form from afar. The silhouette of the floor piece resembles the isolated, frozen edge of a wave with the crest reaching more than 3 feet. The wall piece—flowing like a geometric, chocolate-brown, petrified waterfall or perhaps articulating the edges of a soft hillside—ripples down the wall and into the space of the viewer. The pieces are called *Overflow* and *Cascade*, respectively, and bring forth ideas of the mixture of water and earth, of the strange substance of liquid soil transfixed in space.

As sculptural form, Hamrol's intense and large-scale works hover between the genres of Minimalism and Land Art. The "electric fabric knife" that Hamrol employs to cut the inch-thick felt into circles or "modules," as he calls them, is the same technology that his grandfather used to cut complex patterns for the garment industry. However, this tool also allows for a geometric simplicity. Hamrol carefully cuts the felt from flat sheets into discs as if they were sliced from a geological core sample. He then layers these plates one upon another and one after the other, with swells and valleys held up by barely visible wooden supports. The nuanced variations and repetitions within this unified system remind one of the cadences of echoes reflecting back from a mountain or a hill to the listener.



Modules of various materials—stones, sandbags, blocks of ice, and timbers—have formed the basis of many of Hamrol's early site-specific works and installations. Located outdoors, each sculpture responded accordingly to its material genus when subjected to rain, sun, wind, and other natural elements. Changes in form were rapid, gradual, or imperceptible, and this was an integral aspect of the works. In this installation, the artist himself will act as the agent of change. Hamrol will re-order *Overflow* twice during the course of exhibition, changing the landscape in the gallery to make clear that permanence is not his objective.

The changing landscape is also germane to the work of Joan Perlman who speaks eloquently about her interest in “ephemeral processes that create real things.” Her interest is in transformative and metamorphic forces that greatly alter Earth’s terrain, revealing

the impermanent and transitory qualities of the natural world. She is drawn to the exquisite and ethereal lights, colors, textures, and forms found in subarctic lands.



For Perlman, the country of Iceland is her long-standing muse. Its topography is, in part, created through the alchemy of volcanic energy reacting with water and rock. With its young geology, swift icy meltwaters, and eruptive activity, this terrain can remake itself in a surprisingly short time. During her frequent visits there, Perlman takes incredibly

arresting videos and photographs, which form part of her oeuvre. They are a window into the effects of these earthly forces; the planet’s invisible energy is made visible in her films, photographs, monoprints, and paintings.

Perlman’s large, subtle, abstract paintings (8 by 7 feet to 8 by 6 feet) in this exhibition are made with meticulous attention and sensitivity to process. The inception and inspiration for the works comes from aerial video and photographs captured by Perlman during flights in small aircrafts over Iceland’s remote highlands as well as other sources, including scientific documentation from glaciologists. Her use of aerial perspective allows for an acute observation of both scale and of detail. As she suggests, “the vast shaping of the earth through geological processes can truly be seen from the air.” Each painting is roughly based on a detail taken from an aerial frame. The process of land erosion—the forces of melting glaciers as they morph the land, the mutability of water and earth—is transfixed by her photograph and then (loosely) transferred, as an image, into her paintings.

In her studio, Perlman carefully builds up the surface of the canvases. She first lays down a kind of abstract map with acrylic paint and mediums. Some canvases are upright, others are flat and still others are put into Perlman’s own custom pouring device—a keen invention—that can tilt her large canvases at different angles, engendering indexes of slow, meandering pours or straight streaks of liquid flows. She applies metallic paints and mixes most of her acrylics



with glazes that make for luminous colors, especially those in the range of silvery-blue, copper-green, and copper-blue hues reminiscent of glacial waters. She also infuses amalgamations of blacks, browns, grays, and iron oxides that are rich in color like silt, soil, and alluvium. Much of her studio work is engaged with mark-making;

screening; and pouring, dripping, and flooding of color, using a large array of tools but without a fixed recipe or formula. In short, her process is a kind of beautiful alchemy of acrylic chemistry to accomplish luscious, complex, abstract forms of light and color.

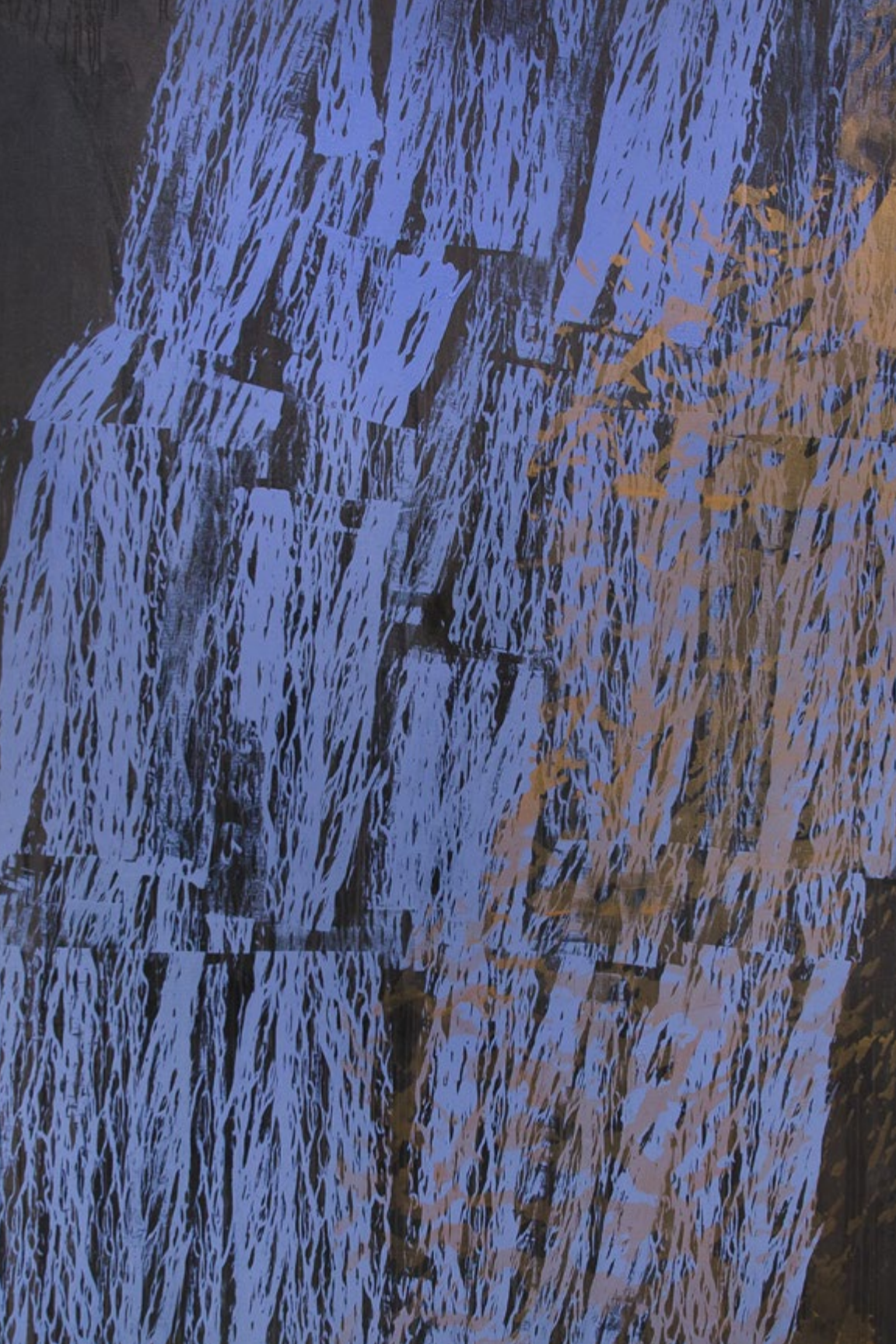
As the title of the exhibition suggests—to grasp “*a sky in the palm of a hand*,”¹—we understand, as viewers, that the phenomena alluded to in both Perlman’s and Hamrol’s artworks refers to forces, some of which are much older and vaster than the scale of things human. Their works attest to the ineluctable changes in landscape: the silted waterfall, liquid soil, the frozen scape, the flowing sediments, the transformation of magma, the undoing of glaciers, and the morphing of the coastlines. The movements of ice, water, soil, and rocks are all impartial witnesses to the inevitable entropy of nature and are manifested in their works as a frozen moment. We can now return to Stevens’s poem: what is it that the viewer beholds? “Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.” Alas, we are not snowmen. We are the viewers and inventors of meaning in our ever-changing surroundings. From each of our perspectives, we can, with our imaginations, behold the landscape as makers of that nothing into something that is.

Karin Lanzoni

¹The title of this exhibition is from the poem “No Shadow,” by W.S. Merwin published in *The Shadow of Sirius* (Port Townsend, Wash: Copper Canyon Press, 2008).

Interior images (left to right): Installation view of Lloyd Hamrol, *Overflow #1*, 2016. Industrial felt, 44 x 124 x 276 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo © 2016 Don Milici; Joan Perlman, *Nyiós*, 2016. Acrylic, silkscreen on canvas, 96 x 84 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo © 2016 Gene Ogami; Joan Perlman, *Untitled*, 2016. Acrylic, silkscreen on paper, 22 x 30 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo © 2016 Gene Ogami





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On view in the South Gallery, *Lloyd Hamrol/Joan Perlman: "a sky in the palm of a hand"* is organized by the Pasadena Museum of California Art and supported by the PMCA Board of Directors, PMCA Ambassador Circle, and Pasadena Arts League.

Cover: Lloyd Hamrol, *Overflow #1* [detail], 2016. Industrial felt, 44 x 124 x 276 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo © 2016 Sarah Shoemake

Gate fold left: Lloyd Hamrol, *Cascade*, 2016. Industrial felt, 96 x 145 x 138 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo © 2016 Don Milici

Gate fold right: Joan Perlman, *Skeiðarársandur* [detail], 2016. Acrylic, silkscreen on canvas, 96 x 84 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo © 2016 Gene Ogami

Back Cover: Joan Perlman, Detail of video still from *Break*, 2016. TRT 4:37, HD digital video, 16:9 format. Soundtrack composed by Laurie Spiegel. Courtesy of the artist

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