

Julian Hatton: The Hudson Review

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At the Galleries

Two very different but equally engaging approaches to landscape were demonstrated by Julian Hatton's "New Season" at Elizabeth Harris Gallery and Graham Nickson's "Spectrum" at Betty Cuninghame Gallery. Hatton's recent canvases functioned at once as bold abstractions constructed with zones of saturated color and as convincing evocations of tree trunks, fields, and shrubs, in both near and distant views, all transubstantiated into broad gestures of a rapid brush. The most recent paintings—2014–2015—were more casually constructed than the slightly earlier works—2012 and 2013—a logical development, given the newer pictures' often larger size and more generous internal scale. The expressionist echoes that have enlivened much of Hatton's work were still present, but with a new sense of freedom and daring. There's never been anything literal about Hatton's evocations of the landscape, but his newest pictures seemed to distill his pleasure in the natural world into an even more personal language of rhythmic strokes and touches, as if the act of transferring oil paint to a surface recapitulated the energy of growth itself. I was particularly interested in *Trouble*, a densely layered, moody canvas from 2015, distinguished by an odd, autumnal palette of cream, greenish blue, and orange, tamed with blueblacks. *Trouble* seemed to resonate with the character of a particular, albeit unidentifiable place, at the same time that it appeared to be on the verge of falling apart. I kept going back to it.