

**MUSEUMS**

Review by Mark Jenkins

July 23, 2021 at 6:00 a.m. EDT



(L) "Blend 42" by Farida Hughes mixes oil paint with resin to make shiny 3-D pools that, when dry, suggest colored glass. (The Athenaeum)

(R) "Reminiscence" by Yasmin Bussiere is inspired by her travels to Central Asia in her use of shades of metallic gold flecked with silver. (The Art League Gallery)

## Hughes and Bussiere

The paintings of Farida Hughes and Yasmin Bussiere, on view two blocks apart in Alexandria, are in the color-field tradition. Yet neither's work would have been welcomed by the leading arbiters of that style in the mid-20th century. For one thing, the artists make pictures that are about something more than color and form.

Bussiere is inspired by travels in a particular region, Central Asia, which she recollects principally in shades of metallic gold flecked with silver. The paintings in her Art League show, "Eastern Light," are landscapes, but most are essentially abstract. The local artist, who has family ties to Uzbekistan, just hints at geographic features: There's a cavelike blackness at the center of "Portal of Imagination," and in "Revelations," a golden orb in a slightly darker tone than its surroundings might be the sun. The few pictures that place impressionistic horsemen upon the gilded steppes are less convincing, perhaps because Bussiere is more interested in conjuring eternity than action.

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Both Bussiere and Hughes apply pigment thickly — once a color field no-no — but in different ways. Bussiere goes for opaque, while Hughes prefers translucent. Hughes’s “A Line Doesn’t End With Me,” at the Athenaeum, might appear familiar to fans of the Washington colorists who came to prominence in the 1950s. The Maryland artist overlaps limpid hues, echoing Morris Louis’s style if not his technique. Her approach is to mix oil paint with resin to make shiny 3-D pools that, when dry, suggest colored glass.

The show’s title doesn’t refer to visual lines. Each piece was inspired by an acquaintance’s genetic makeup, whether known from DNA testing or family lore. A notebook offers the testimonies of the people whose heritages the artist symbolically represents, most of which are diverse enough to be rainbow coalitions. (One person, Chinese on both sides, is expressed only by a range of greens.) Hughes’s paintings are ravishing merely as color-blending exercises, but their layered depths have poignant human significance.

**Yasmin Bussiere: Eastern Light** Through Aug. 8 at the [Art League Gallery](#), Torpedo Factory, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria.

**Farida Hughes: A Line Doesn’t End With Me** Through Aug. 8 at [the Athenaeum](#), 201 Prince St., Alexandria.