

# Pictures Within Pictures: A Review of Jessie Edelman at Andrew Rafacz

BY ALAN POCARO | MAY 23, 2023



*Installation view, Jessie Edelman "Invitations"/Courtesy: Andrew Rafacz*

An endless summer pulsating with the sun-soaked cadences of post-impressionism, Jessie Edelman's seductive new show "Invitations" is resplendent with a frenzied joy that hints toward deeper desperation. The nine oils on display are a sweet-and-sour cacophony of tropical-punch color and the cruel perfection of clear skies, ripe fruit and warm sea breezes. These languid worlds, all pictures within pictures, are lovely, and in their own way, terrifying.



Jessie Edelman "Rewards," 2023. Oil on canvas 45 x 54 inches/Courtesy: Andrew Rafacz

Superficially, the New York-based Edelman conjures up pictures that look like vacation snapshots or the antiseptic interiors of *Architectural Digest*. Speakers, turntables and designer chairs fill out otherwise vacant rooms where you can almost hear the inoffensive banality of ambient electronica echo through the corridors. Her touch—naïve with a wink and a nod—ripples with the ebb and flow of ocean swells. Sometimes the surface is peaked, charged with paint, thick and ripe like the papaya and tulips she depicts. And sometimes, like a pane of glass, the paint is thin, smooth and barely there.

A love of Cezanne, Matisse and, more contemporaneously, maybe John McAllister, winds its way through the *mise en abyme* of "Cross Breeze," "Past Your Bedtime," and "We've Been Here Before." Sometimes the

scenes appear submerged, inset within their false borders. And sometimes they rest upon the surface of the picture plane. The distinctions are usually pretty clear. But in the exquisite and alluring “Shrine,” there is something scattered and unyielding. Something that refuses an easy read and is confident, capable and proud in its uncertainty.



Jessie Edelman "Shrine," 2023. Oil on canvas 72 x 60 inches/Courtesy: Andrew Rafacz

The spatial distinctions that separate “Shrine”’s patterned margin and the glass-walled world beyond collapse is a jarring and triumphant spatial ambivalence, subverting the acquisitive happiness on offer. “Nothing can be this perfect,” it seems to say. Intentional or not, Edelman’s paintings are a kind of gorgeous warning, a reminder that sunny, seventy-five-degree days in February come at a price. And every year the high tide gets a little higher.

*Jessie Edelman’s “Invitations” at Andrew Rafacz, 1749 West Chicago, on view through May 27.*

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