



JEFF BAILEY GALLERY

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Nature, as filtered through art, can yield fascinating results as various as the plein-air paintings of Impressionism, the Land Art of the 1960s or the spate of recent photographs staged outdoors. Similarly, painter Louise Belcourt makes striking use of an abstract vocabulary – a bold palette and minimal forms – in landscape paintings that suggest a visual version of Zen Koans as she seeks to reconcile the dualities of representation and abstraction. Belcourt's imagery may appear unreal but it springs from real life. She draws inspiration from the desolate landscapes of her native northeastern Quebec, an area she visits yearly.

Many of Belcourt's recent canvases, such as *Hedge Painting #2* (2003), are dominated by monolithic green forms that, as the title implies, evoke garden hedges. Within the sky-blue ground, hints of buttery yellow peek through the thickly applied paint. A dense horizontal slab of bright red to the right of the hedge and a band of lemon beneath it suggest that vast territories lie beyond the bounds of the picture plane.



Louise Belcourt, *Hedge Painting #1*, 2003

Hedge Painting #1 (2003) conveys a similar expansiveness. The central form resembles a pair of stacked pods, situated centrally in a field of color that ranges from pale sea-blue to light beige. One of the pods is pea-colored and split open at one end, revealing a narrow expanse of black. An obvious influence on Belcourt is the late, cartoonlike work of Philip Guston, but you can also see a parallel to Richard Serra's sculptures. With its lush simplicity, this show contains the sense-memory of a landscape's shifts in scale and form.

- Max Henry