

JOHNSON LOWE GALLERY

Press Release:

Jodi Hays, *To Harden and Heal*

On view May 9, 2025 – June 28, 2025

Opening Reception: Friday, May 9th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Atlanta, Georgia — Johnson Lowe Gallery is pleased to present *To Harden and Heal*, the first solo exhibition with the gallery by Jodi Hays, an Arkansas-born, Nashville-based artist whose multidisciplinary practice mines painting, poetry, reclaimed materials, and rural crafts. Opening Friday, May 9, the exhibition focuses on the last five years of Hays's work—a period marked by a deepened transformation of everyday materials, especially cardboard and textiles. Her process is tactile and slow: surfaces are dyed, sewn, collaged, and weathered. The labor shows. These aren't paintings in the traditional sense, but dense, built objects—at once tender and exacting.

Many of these materials begin submerged—literally. Cardboard is sunk into dye baths, pulled out, dried, pressed, and then collaged into larger compositions. The dye brings out the corrugation and structure of the cardboard itself—its ribs and flutes, the hidden skeleton of packaging—while the artist's hand imposes rhythm and order through stitching and layering. The results are neither flat nor entirely sculptural. They hold a skin-like tension: rigid but yielding, patched but complete. These hybrid forms—what she calls constructions—evoke the visual language of quilt-making, printmaking, and weather itself.

Though the works are grounded in Southern material culture, they push outward, refusing nostalgia or regional cliché. The detritus is specific—drawn from the South—but the gesture is broader, more American. These are the leftovers of a place and a people, reformed and re-seen through the lens of abstraction. Hays doesn't illustrate the South; she distills it, making room for contradiction and nuance, irony and affection.

To Harden and Heal points to a dual movement in the work: a hardening of soft materials through time, labor, and process, and a healing — a marriage of histories through transformation. These pieces speak a global language of abstraction, but with an unmistakable accent—drawling, inventive, and unshy about color or surface. Somewhere between Gee's Bend and Ruscha, Bradford and Johns—inflected by Southern poetics and a restless experimentation, Hays carves out a space that is distinctly her own.

764 Miami Circle NE, Suite 210, Atlanta, GA 30324

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About Jodu Hays

Jodi Hays (b. 1976, Hot Springs, AR) received her BFA from the University of Tennessee and her MFA from the Vermont College of Fine Art. Her work has been exhibited nationally at institutions including the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Brooks Museum of Art, Boston Center for the Arts, and Cooper Union. Solo exhibitions include *The Find* at Night Gallery, Los Angeles (2022), *The Burden of Wait* at Susan Inglett Gallery, New York (2023), and *Outskirts* at the Browsing Room, Nashville (2020). Hays has participated in numerous group exhibitions and her work is held in collections such as the Birmingham Museum of Art, the Tennessee State Museum, and J. Crew Group. She has received awards from the NYFA/Rauschenberg Foundation, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Sustainable Arts Foundation, and the Hopper Prize. Hays is currently based in Nashville, TN.

Jodi Hays's work inhabits a space where abstraction becomes a vessel for memory, protest, and the poetics of place. Grounded in Southern material culture and personal history, her constructions—built from salvaged textiles, cardboard, and everyday detritus—carry the textures of labor, loss, and inheritance. With a formal rigor that echoes post-minimalism and a tactile sensibility informed by fiber arts, Hays distills fragments of domestic life and rural America into compositions that resist sentimentality without forsaking tenderness. Whether referencing quilt-making, the architecture of surveillance, or the ghosts of painterly forebears, her work negotiates the tension between subtlety and urgency, inviting abstraction to hold grief, critique, and repair in the same gesture. In this way, Hays not only reclaims overlooked materials but also challenges the limits of what abstraction can do—and for whom it can speak.

About Johnson Lowe Gallery

Johnson Lowe Gallery champions emerging, mid-career, and established artists from our region and beyond. Our program reveres the transformative power of artistic expression, honoring the profound nature of visual language and its ability to drive personal and societal paradigm shifts.

Founded in 1989 by Bill Lowe, the gallery's extensive exhibition history includes renowned artists such as Thornton Dial, Michael David, Ida Applebroog, Markus Lupertz and Leiko Ikemura. In 2023, the gallery was re-established as Johnson Lowe Gallery under the Direction of Donovan Johnson with *The Alchemists*, a historic exhibition co-curated by Seph Rodney. This exhibition featured works by Sanford Biggers, Mark Bradford, Ebony G. Patterson, Thornton Dial, William Downs, Shanequa Gay, Trenton Doyle Hancock, and many others.

Notes to Editors

Artist: Jodi Hays

Title: *To Harden and Heal*

Dates: May 9, 2025 – July 5, 2025

Address:

764 Miami Cir NE #210, Atlanta, GA 30324

Hours:

Tuesday – Friday | 10:00 am – 5:30 pm

Saturday | 11:00 am – 5:30 pm

Sunday, Monday, and Evenings by appointment

[Instagram](#)

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