

# Abstract artist captures beauty of local landscapes

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**J**ulika Lackner has been mesmerized by the Los Angeles night sky since the pandemic began. The lockdown changed the longtime landscape artist's focus and led her to create "Evening Mile: The Paintings of Julika Lackner" on display Glendale's Forest Lawn Museum from Saturday, Jan. 29, to Sunday, May 1.

An in-person show, "Evening Mile" features large-scale paintings that have a profound effect on patrons.

"This is the first time the series is going to be shown in real life," said the Berlin-born artist who now lives in Eagle Rock.

"What I realize is that the paintings can look quite repetitive — they're all landscapes, all at twilight, all with lines in the sky. What it has become about for me is the differences within each painting and within each sunset. So, it is really exciting to show them in a room next to each other for people to experience that way. To show them in real life versus photos of them, these are even better in person. That's usually the case with paintings."

The series features views from her backyard in Eagle Rock and Southern California at large. Even now, she said the series is not complete. She plans to expand her radius of sites, though she is still not traveling far.

## Site-specific works

For the Forest Lawn exhibition, she created three site-specific works.

She went to the museum when it was closed and took pictures of the views from the west, the north and the south. The southern view looks toward Downtown LA, the north one looks at Glendale and the west one looks into the San Fernando Valley.

"It's really neat to have a show where people can walk outside and see that view," Lackner said. "They can kind of see how I represent that view in my paintings. That was a really exciting part of the show for me."

Set in a cemetery, the museum has free parking and public admission.

The 17-piece exhibition has evolved since it debuted in 2021. Lackner said the paintings are larger, especially the one of Downtown LA, which is the show's centerpiece.

"My views in the beginning were very limited," Lackner said. "So much about the pandemic in the beginning brought it very close and intimate. As the world started opening up, thankfully, I was able to go a bit farther — all still Southern California, but there are ones from Santa Barbara Bay and elsewhere."

## Moving across the pond

After Lackner moved to Los Angeles from Berlin, she earned an MFA from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena.

In Berlin, she was creating representational paintings of subway stations. That changed when she arrived in Pasadena.

"I changed into painting Los Angeles at night, but it was still pretty representational," she said.

"It was all about paint and the orbs of flight in the fog and that big dome of LA sky that is always lit."

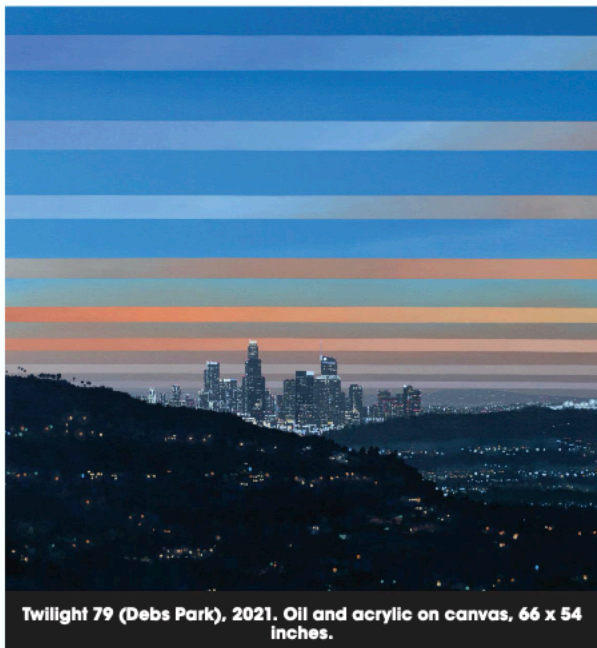
She then painted in a more abstract manner, delving into atmosphere and space. She started a series of linear landscapes that featured California, Yellowstone, Death Valley and Yosemite — what she called all the heavy hitters of dramatic landscapes. Then 2020 came and the lockdowns grounded her.

"For the very first time, I thought I should paint my view," Lackner said. "We have a wraparound deck and I'd never thought seriously to paint (my view)."

She watched the sunset every night, taking pictures that she could refer to while painting. She merged her style from grad school with her linear landscapes by bringing in colored lines that represented the light that is in the city reflected into the sky.

The Forest Lawn show contains some of her older paintings, which provide context for this nocturnal series.

There is one representational landscape, one complete abstraction with just lines and then another that is a landscape where the lines across the sky first started to come in.



Twilight 79 (Debs Park), 2021. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 66 x 54 inches.



Twilight 81 (Forest Lawn Museum looking West), 2021. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 inches.



Twilight 71 (Santa Barbara Bay), 2021. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 inches

## From the beginning

She began the series of twilight paintings in April 2020. When the pandemic started, she was working on her linear landscapes and commissions. Then she saw a photo she took on her phone of the night sky from her deck and was inspired to paint that.

"I was trying to capture the twinkling lights in the hills," Lackner said. "It had this very warm feeling. I wanted the twinkling lights, but I didn't want the dark, dark night sky. That time right after the sun went down has this really nice way of bringing the city lights up into the sky. It's just a gorgeous time of day."

Previously, she avoided sunset and sunrise. The change received a warm reception. "That makes a difference," she said. "I had an immediate positive response and that was very encouraging."

She is excited to exhibit at the Forest Lawn, an institution that exhibits permanent and touring collections. She was offered space in the front room, which, ironically, has a great view.

The series has been her most popular, in part because she feels Los Angeles doesn't always get the love that it deserves with art and aesthetics.

"It is really a beautiful place," Lackner said. "The people who live here love it and are happy to see it be treated with such respect, but also really bringing out the beauty of the place, especially this northeast area with the hills and everything."

She is also happy to give back to Eagle Rock, Glendale and Pasadena because they mean a lot to her.

"The past two years have been really, really difficult for most people in various ways," Lackner said. "I feel the best part of the pandemic is it's brought people closer and made them more understanding and gentler, one would hope so anyway. This work, which tends to be on the uplifting side, is me wanting to give back to the community as well as me appreciating my community."

Photos courtesy of Julika Lackner