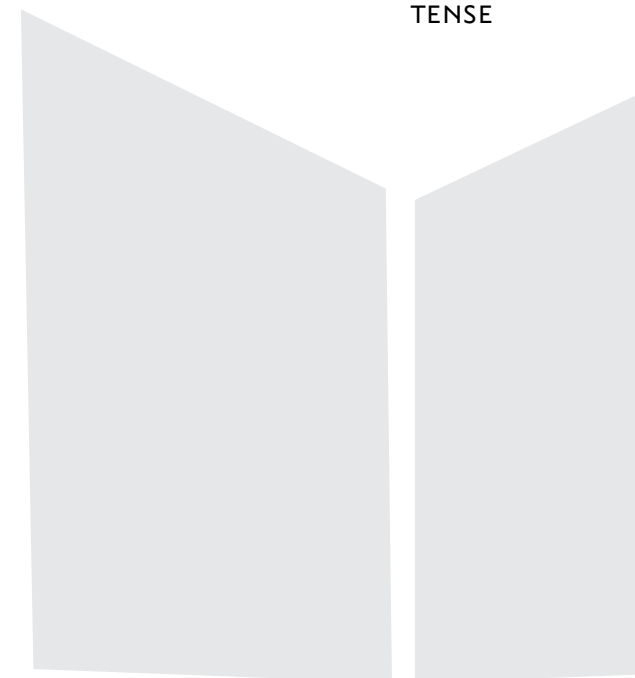


DAHLIA ELSAYED:  
NAVIGATIONS  
IN  
THE  
PRESENT  
TENSE



DAHLIA ELSAYED:  
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Newark-based artist Dahlia Elsayed reexamines the interconnectedness of writing and painting in her latest exhibition, *Navigations in the Present Tense*. Inspired by a recent residency at the Joan Mitchell Foundation in New Orleans (Spring 2013), she adopted harder edges and bold colors such as orange, evoking its association with construction signage and barriers. These recent compositions fuse multiple perspective points: looking up, down, sideways, and inside from both close-up and far away. Breaking from her previous work, she now favors fewer elements in isolation and juxtaposition to each other. The individual forms are larger; they span or push the boundaries of the entire composition instead of being small, discrete, and self-contained. Elsayed newly integrates text as a footnote or a list of things rather than an overarching word that defines the composition. As a result, the reader is drawn into the juxtaposition of words, the sounds of reading them aloud (alliteration in some cases), and the visual and mental associations they conjure. Her language is specific to a place, landscape, experience, and a moment in time.

Language further evolves in this accompanying publication that pairs a handful of diminutive compositions with a poem. The colorful abstract compositions mimic stanzas of a poem, where pauses and breaks can be used to emphasize words or images around them. The arranged forms evoke sky, sun, horizon, architecture, and water. Her words now occupy pages of their own.

Elsayed found inspiration in the writing of William Carlos Williams (1883 – 1963). She previously created “Paterson Landscapes” (2001-2), a series of paintings inspired by the poem “Paterson,” and revisited the subject for this exhibition at William Paterson University. Elsayed conducted research on Williams at the library in Rutherford, the poet’s hometown. Culling through his poetry, autobiography, interviews, statements, and journals, she discovered an affinity for Williams’ process of writing the poem “Paterson.” Like Williams, she visited Paterson—strolling, listening, observing, and conversing in this post-industrial city. Her poem incorporates several citations of Williams’ own words that capture what Elsayed describes as “Williams’ fluctuations between doubt and drive, his idea of the city as a metaphor for man, and his use of mosaic structure—mixing in letters, historical documents alongside his own prose.”

In the pages of this book, there is a new call and response between painting and text and between Elsayed and Williams. Elsayed constructs a personal and collective sense of place, merging her own discoveries with the familiar, recognizable aspects of the city of Paterson, past and present. We are reminded of the city’s inventions: the Holland submarine, the Wright Brothers airplane engine; the city’s famous forebears: Alexander Hamilton, Lou Costello; and the city’s food and smells: Latino bakeries, Texas Weiner joints, and pizzerias. And we are encouraged to meander, look again, and pause in her words and forms.

Kristen Evangelista, Director

To make a start,  
out of particulars  
and make them general, rolling  
up the sum, by defective means –  
Sniffing the trees,  
just another dog  
among a lot of dogs. What  
else is there?

- From “Paterson,” by William Carlos Williams



### Navigations in the Present Tense

It was sunny,  
maybe the best day of the year  
It was the best day of the year.  
There were a hundred modifications of this general plan  
Something (think)  
on the brink, bring, bridge  
Something of a binge.

A bobbin,  
a packing slip,  
a barrel,  
a magic trick.  
This seemed to me to be what a poem was for.



To plant, to fabricate, to fold  
a bit of a plane engine  
and almost  
a submarine.

To trap, to net, to catch  
and release  
It became more and more the lucky burden,  
all those near misses.





Larry Doby. The origin of coordinates.

(navigations in the present tense)

It was a Wednesday

It was a Sunday

I went on Sundays in summer.

A back road, a flood zone, a train track, a market

A history of hot dogs.

And scrapping and scraping, for arms

to arm, to shell

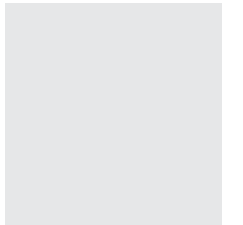
Bivalves (Binary, Brick, Bisect)

To plan, to plot, to grid

To bend around

And I searched around for what would be the center of the thing,

And over (and under) her historic center.





A bakery.

A bakery.

A bakery.

Something you could visualize so distinctly, practically hold it in the hollow of your hand

A navigable landmark.

Lou Costello,

Alexander Hamilton.

To thump, the doppler, a 5-piece living room set  
(for sale or rent)

PUPUSA

next door to

PUPUSA

next door to

PIZZA

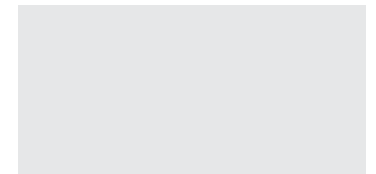
To blurt out the information second hand... kills all the mystery of the thing

That was all her land use. Syria.



To squeeze, to squeeze.  
Meet me at the roundabout  
Meet me at the mill  
Meet me at the 7-11  
Meet me at the mall  
*Almost casual.*

To light, to loose, to loft, to loom  
To perch, to lift, to dip, to swoon  
Fancy pants,  
Complex.  
I wanted a city. I thought of Newark, that's on the river too.  
A box inside of another box and milkshakes  
All this Cherry Vanilla (time)

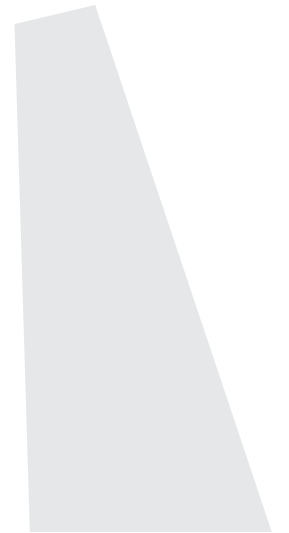






Hairpin to a fault,  
Some gradual abolition and all that furnish, finish.  
To point, to view, to point  
Dutch cemetery with a depth curve  
Almost sensual.

Sneaker Zone  
Red, White and Blue  
Main Army Navy  
NJ French Kiss.  
To not touch,  
to Bargain.  
The thing was to use multiple facets.





Little Lima, Little Istanbul, Little Dearborn  
Made for an audience of one  
The meander line, meanderable,  
The variable foot.

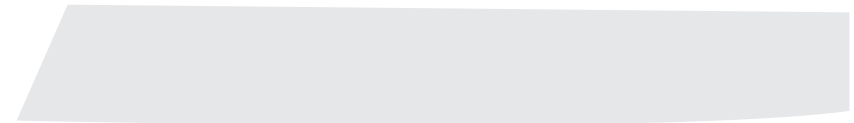
Passaic County 651  
Passaic County 675  
Passaic County 639  
A week ago I went into a tailspin,  
It almost finished me.





From the bounding line, Manor section, to the Halal south  
Eastside and Near Eastside,  
I flounder and flunk  
Four becomes five.

In silk, to strike  
a star chart for midday.  
To slash it unmercifully  
An ultra directional transmitter  
Metes and bounds.





To labor, to steam, to sink, to bunker  
I wanted something nearer home, something knowable  
A national manufactory,  
A log painted sky blue, old ochre walkway  
Walk away.

The mean sea level  
Nearing completion,  
The catastrophe of the Falls itself,  
A girl beating a rug.

DAHLIA ELSAYED

Born in New York, NY, 1969

Lives in Palisades Park, NJ; works in Newark, NJ

#### EDUCATION

1994 MFA Creative Writing, Columbia University, New York, NY

1992 BA English, Barnard College, New York, NY

#### SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 *Hither and Yon*, New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, NJ  
*Ideological Tug Of War*, Austin Peay State University Art Galleries, Clarksville, TN
- 2011 *Possibles, Probables*, Ice House Gallery, Monmouth University, West Long Branch, NJ  
*The Sticky Parts*, South Seattle Community College Art Gallery, WA  
*Perennial Bloom*, BravinLee Programs, Artist Book Program, New York, NY
- 2010 *Orienteering*, Palace of Fine Arts, 12th Cairo Biennale, Egypt (exh. cat.)  
*...And Then Some*, Aljira Center For Contemporary Art, Newark, NJ  
*All Of It*, Gallery Aferro, Newark, NJ (exh. cat.)
- 2008 *For The Realization of Every Wish...*, Crybaby Gallery/City of Asbury Park, NJ (temporary outdoor public art installation)
- 2006 *Periphery*, Portlock Black Cultural Center, Lafayette College, Easton, PA
- 2004 *Talk Back*, Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art, Gdansk, Poland
- 2003 *Monuments of Her Last Year*, Jersey City Museum, NJ

#### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 *Introduction, S&I Projects*, New York, NY  
*Contemporary Cartographies*, Lehman College Art Gallery, Bronx, NY  
*The EMO Show*, Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Project Space, New York, NY  
*Mapnificent*, American Institute of Graphic Arts Gallery, Philadelphia, PA  
*Your Body is a Battleground*, Pristine Galerie, Monterrey, Mexico
- 2012 *Space Invaders*, Lehman College Art Gallery, Bronx, NY  
*The rug pulled out from beneath you; you lie on the floor*, Hedreen Gallery, Seattle University, Seattle, WA  
*Size Matters: Small Works from the Fine Art Collection*, New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, NJ
- 2011 *The Art of Mapping*, TAG Fine Arts, London, UK  
*Mapping*, Hemphill Fine Arts, Washington, D.C.
- 2010 *You Are Here: The Psychogeography of the City*, Pratt Manhattan Gallery, New York, NY  
*One Thousand and One Nights: The Narrative Tradition in Contemporary Middle Eastern Art*, William Paterson University Galleries, Wayne, NJ (exh. cat.)
- 2009 *Tectonic*, Seton Hall University, Newark, NJ  
*Kuf-Mold-Rotterdam, A-Locatie Gallery*, Rotterdam, Netherlands  
*Unbounded: New Art for a New Century*, Newark Museum, NJ  
*Flow: Art/Text/New Media*, Center for Book Arts, New York, NY
- 2008 *Kuf-Mold-Ghent*, (site-specific installation) Gallery Jan Colle, Ghent, Belgium  
*Garden of Delights*, Yeosu International Art Festival, South Korea  
*Orebro Video Art Festival*, Orebro Kunsthall, Sweden  
*The Stories We Tell: Screening*, Art in General, New York, NY  
*Sprawl*, Jersey City Museum, Jersey City, NJ
- 2007 *Desideratum*, Gallery Aferro, Newark, NJ  
*Under Construction in Venice*, curated by Barbara Höffer, Island of San Lazzaro degli Armeni, Venice, Italy
- 2006 *Personal Geographies*, Hunter College Times Square Gallery, New York, NY (exh. cat.)
- 2005 *Viewfinder*, Moti Hasson Gallery, New York, NY  
*New Jersey Arts Annual*, curated by Beth Venn, Montclair Art Museum, NJ (exh. cat.)  
*Six Degrees of Separation*, Black Maria Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

- 2004 *Phantom Limb*, Unit B Gallery, Chicago, IL  
*The Crystal Land*, curated by Raul Zamudio, Aljira, Newark, NJ  
*Unveiling the Image*, New Jersey Center for Visual Art, Summit, NJ
- 2003 *Modelarnia*, Gdansk, Poland

#### SELECTED GRANTS AND RESIDENCIES

- 2013 Joan Mitchell Center Residency Program, New Orleans, LA  
Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Swing Space Program, New York, NY  
Center For Book Arts Workspace Grant, New York, NY
- 2008 Anderson Ranch Residency, Snowmass Village, CO
- 2007 Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant for Painters and Sculptors
- 2005 Artist Fellowship, Rutgers Center for Innovative Printmaking, New Brunswick, NJ  
Artist in Residence, Headlands Center for The Arts, Sausalito, CA
- 2004 New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Individual Artist Fellowship  
Artist in Residence, Newark Museum, NJ  
Creative Capital Professional Development Workshop  
Emerge 6 Program, Aljira Center for Contemporary Art, Newark, NJ
- 2003 ArtsLink Grant for Individual Artists  
Artist Teacher Institute Scholarship Grant, William Paterson University, Wayne, NJ
- 2002 Artist in Residence, Center for Contemporary Art, Yerevan, Armenia  
New Jersey State Council on the Arts Artist Fellowship  
Geraldine R. Dodge Grant, Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT

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- 2012 Graves, Jen. "The Groin, Foods, and More." *The Stranger*, December 12, 2012, 23, *illus.*  
Villalonga, Yuneikys. "On the Arts of Invading Spaces." *Art Experience* 1, no. 10 (Fall 2012): 108, *illus.*
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El Kouedi, Yousi. "Art Review: Dahlia Elsayed." *Al Aribaya*, November 7, 2010, *illus.*
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- 2006 Genocchio, Benjamin. "Knots, In Practice and Theory." *New York Times*, March 19, 2006, sec. New Jersey, 18.
- 2005 D'Aurizio, Elaine. "Eye of the Beholder." *The Record*, March 20, 2005, sec. L, 1-2, *illus.*  
Zamudio, Raul. "The Crystal Land Revisited." *Transcultural NJ: Diverse Artists Shaping Culture and Communities*, Newark: Rutgers University Press, 2004, 94-100, *illus.*
- 2004 Genocchio, Benjamin. "Images on a Transcultural Highway." *New York Times*, December 12, 2004, sec. New Jersey, 16.
- 2003 Berwick, Carly. "How One Artist Filled the 'Holes' Known as New Jersey." *New York Times*, April 27, 2003, sec. New Jersey, 9.  
Zimmer, William. "The Happy Marriage of Words and Pictures." *New York Times*, February 9, 2003, sec. New Jersey, 11, *illus.*  
Bischoff, Dan. "Her Words Decorate Time and Place." *Star-Ledger*, January 19, 2003, Sunday edition, sec.4, 6, *illus.*

#### SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

The Newark Museum · US Department of State · Art in Embassies · The Jersey City Museum · Zimmerli Art Museum  
Hunterdon Museum of Art · Noyes Museum of Art · Montclair Art Museum · Newark Public Library · New Jersey State Museum  
Morris Museum · New Jersey State Council on the Arts

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## University Galleries

### WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

Ben Shahn Center for the Visual Arts  
300 Pompton Road, Wayne, NJ 07470  
[www.WPUNJ.edu/coac/gallery/](http://www.WPUNJ.edu/coac/gallery/)

Kristen Evangelista, Director  
Emily Johnsen, Program Assistant



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- Kristen Evangelista



#### IMAGES

*Navigations in the Present Tense Process Notes #1-12, 2013* acrylic on paper, glitter, tape, dimensions variable

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