

TWO COATS OF PAINT

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GALLERY SHOWS

Past, present, future: Lizbeth Mitty and Dana James

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Lizbeth Mitty in her Redhook studio

Contributed by Katie Hector / The handsome and evocative two-person show currently at M. David & Co. Gallery in Bushwick is the first public exhibition that **Lizbeth Mitty** and her daughter **Dana James** have had together. Yet, in retrospect, it seems to have been inevitable. Mitty grew up in Queens, and James was raised in her parents' loft in TriBeCa, so they are acutely in tune with the perpetual flux of New York. Intrinsic to the work of both artists is the physical process of adding and subtracting. This shared disposition seems to be, at least in part, a product of living where new skyscrapers rise frequently, business ownership often changes hands, and subway lines are periodically re-oriented. Such developments signify growth but also cancellation and loss.



Dana James in her Brooklyn studio

Despite dissimilar imagery, both Mitty's and James's paintings symbolize a generational unfolding that reflects the evolution of New York. Inspired by cast-off detritus and glimmering metal remnants from earlier eras, Mitty's work investigates the "abstract beauty of deteriorating or overlooked corners visible within urban architecture." At the level of process, she says, she simply endeavors to understand a place empirically and translate that understanding into a series of marks. But her imagery conjures a deep sense of decadence, mystery, and longing.

Much like her mother, James thinks philosophically about the passage of time and centers much of her work around the concept of memory. James likes to test the limits of paint and celebrate the accidental. She likes to experiment, and so materials for a single piece might include ink, dye, acrylic, encaustic, pigment, oil, velvet, and more. Her abstract paintings, in turn, seem at once nonchalant and mystical.

Throughout her childhood James took cues from Mitty, particularly her mother's connection with the urban environment, her painterly inventiveness, and her ability to structure life around a creative practice. Over time their relationship matured: now they are not only mother and daughter but also peers, friends, and mutual critics. More broadly, their joint exhibition is occurring in a period of cultural transformation in which the contributions of talented but unsung women are finally being acknowledged and considered. "The Thread" duly honors their bond, their city, and their place in the New York art community.

"The Thread: Lizbeth Mitty and Dana James," M. David & Co. Gallery, 56 Bogart St., Bushwick, Brooklyn, NY. Through April 21, 2019.

About the author: **Katie Hector** is an artist, independent curator, and writer living and working in New York City. She co-directs **The Royal Gallery** in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

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