



JOSEPH HART: A DINNER PARTY WITH BEST FRIENDS AND MORTAL ENEMIES

An interview with Brooklyn-Based artist Joseph Hart by Kate McQuillen

Looking at Joseph Hart's work puts me in an intriguing visual jam: I feel at once as though the entire composition is either about to burst apart into a million pieces, or sit perfectly still in unity forever.

Each piece exists along a hairline fracture, and on one side there's harmony, and on the other side there's chaos. It's a captivating sensation, one of uncertainty and potential, that keeps drawing me back in for a closer look.

My immediate urge is to relate these works, in a grand and heroic way, to the ups and downs of life: stability and instability, conflict and resolution, love and hate, future and past, the known and the unknown. Hurdles get thrown at us unexpectedly and we go down; then we pick ourselves up, brush off the dust, and get back in the saddle.

These works are sitting, just barely, back in that saddle. They're scrappy, rough, and ragged, as if the horse hooves had rumbled across the surface, kicking up dust. And in Hart's studio process, something similar has happened. His methods hinge on having discontent before resolution, and destruction is a key tool in his process. He makes initial exploratory marks and

then adds and subtracts, shifting towards a final image. He moves between doing and undoing, erasing and blacking out, and fights with the composition until a finished one emerges, hanging at a pinpoint of amicability.

Embedded in this visual language are the roles of paper and mark-making. Paper, familiar and malleable, spans and stretches across the works in cut and torn segments. The tip of a graphite stick is felt as a fundamental tool, digging into the surface to establish the initial, intuitive marks that act as the skeleton for the subsequent composition. Loose, scrawled, and scratched, they link the disparate areas, which ratchet upwards in visual complexity through added layers of smudges and paint.

Hart described the works as simultaneously expressing harmony and discontent, "like a dinner party with best friends and mortal enemies." As viewers, we sit at the edge of our seats, at a pause in the conversation.

(left) Joseph Hart, Untitled, collage, acrylic, oil crayon and graphite on paper, 50"x38"2017

KATE MCQUILLEN: Your work presents lots of dichotomies, both in theory and in visual elements: harmony and dischord, conflict and resolution, heavy and light, big and small. What is it about this binary structure that keeps drawing you back?

JOSEPH HART: Nudging opposites towards facing each other is a valuable exercise in my practice. I'm able to better understand the overall context of the thing I'm working on, and maybe not get too comfortable in one way of seeing, thinking and working. F Scott Fitzgerald said something like "first rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in the mind and still retain the ability to function." I appreciate this sentiment.

KATE MCQUILLEN: You use simple tools and techniques of drawing; paper, graphite stick, and gestural marks from the wrist, elbow and shoulder. These are fundamentals that we're taught in school, which often take place in the background of our artmaking. Your works elevate these simple elements to a more complex role, though. Can you talk about how familiar tools and simple gestures operate in your work?

JOSEPH HART: I'm always trying to simplify my work in various ways and not overthink it too much. I try to trust in the power and honesty of that first initial gesture. The materials I use are the materials I love: graphite, paint, paper, found detritus, linen and canvas. Pretty traditional and cliché stuff but that's OK with me. I do sometimes modify my tools. I have a bunch of decent sized tree branches that I tape brushes and graphite sticks to. A sort of extension device so I can get back from the work and interrupt my control.

KATE MCQUILLEN: In our studio visit, we talked a bit about intuition, trust in mark-making, and embracing surprise. How does this play out in your etchings and monoprints?

JOSEPH HART: There is arguably more pre-planning in the prints I've worked on, relative to how I make drawings and paintings. That said, I do try and allow for chance when making prints. One example I can think of is letting technical hiccups survive in the final edition. This drives the master printers I've collaborated with a little crazy, but there is wonderful beauty in those imperfections.

KATE MCQUILLEN: I'm a big fan of your podcast, Deep Color. Tell us a bit about this project and any upcoming shows you may have.

JOSEPH HART: Deep Color is an oral history project where I record casual conversations with visual artists as they discuss their work and lives, then archive the final edits online and in iTunes. The recordings are insightful and forthright—they kind of operate like a heartfelt artist talk that you can keep in your pocket. It's a great resource for anyone curious about how artists work and think. It's becoming a kind of collaborative social practice for me, too. I'm really proud of DC.

I'm in the midst of curating a group show, and making new work for a solo show. Both shows will be at Halsey McKay Gallery, scheduled for March 31 through May 12, 2018. The group show will feature works by Alvaro Barrington, Trisha Brown, Sarah Crowner, Naotaka Hiro, Matthew Kirk, Eddie Martinez, Walter Price, Matt Rich, Beverly Semmes, Susan Tepper and Rachel Eulena Williams. It's an incredible group of artists.

KATE MCQUILLEN: If you could hang out with any artist from any era, who would it be and why?

JOSEPH HART: In this moment I'll say...the late choreographer Trisha Brown. Her performative drawings have had a profound impact on me. I love the physicality, searching and evocation in her marks. I would have loved to have seen one of her performances in real time. Her work will be included in the show I'm curating—very excited about that.

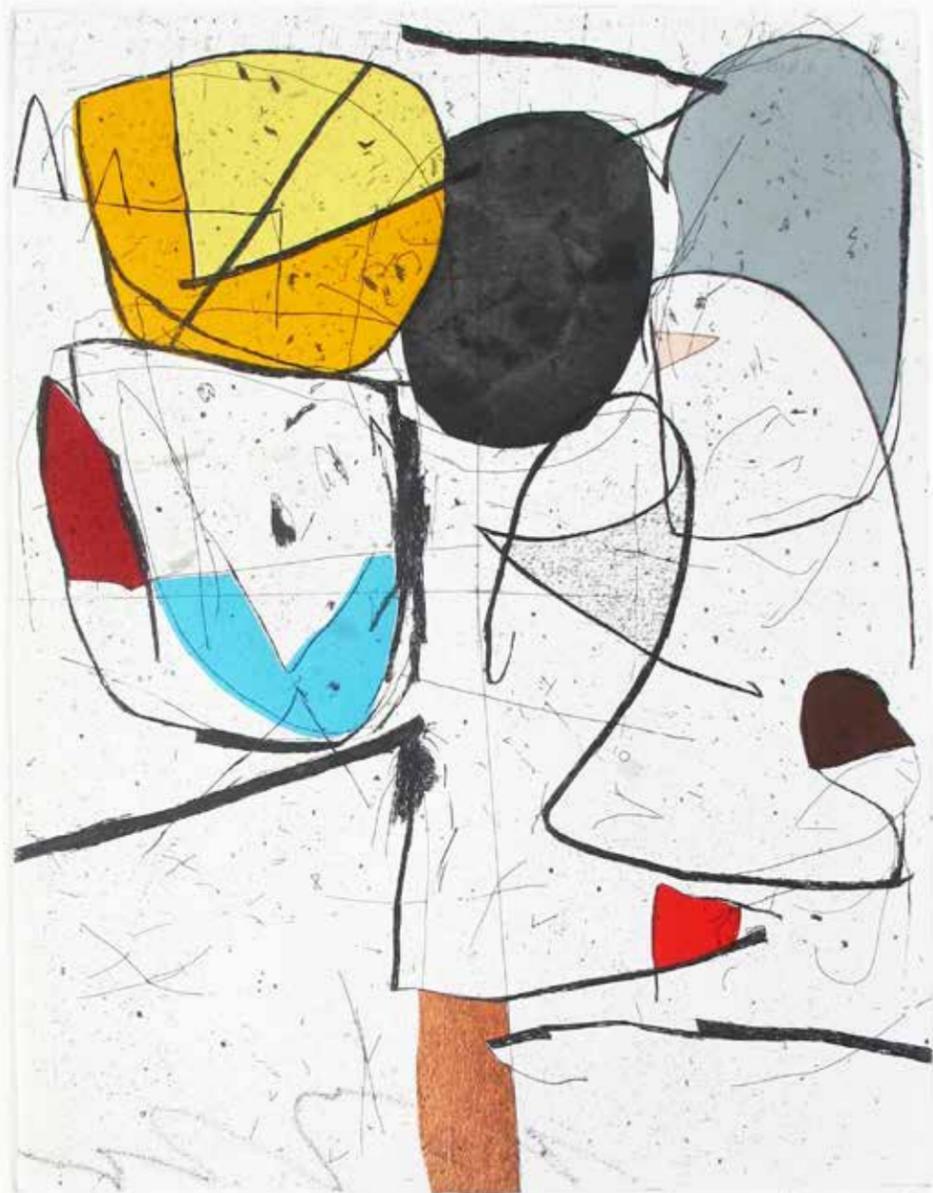


(right) Joseph Hart, *Maxima*, collaged paper, acrylic, oil crayon and graphite on linen, 44"x34" 2017



Joseph Hart (born 1976 in Peterborough, New Hampshire) is an American artist living and working in New York City. In 1999, he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Rhode Island School of Design. Hart's paintings and drawings have recently been exhibited at Anat Ebgi in Los Angeles, Romer Young Gallery in San Francisco, Dieu Donn , Journal Gallery and Halsey Mckay Gallery in New York. His work can be found in the public collections of the RISD Museum, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Davis Museum at Wesley College and The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

(left) Joseph Hart, Untitled, collaged paper, acrylic, oil crayon and graphite on linen, 60"x40" 2018



Joseph Hart, *Nine Ideas*,
1 plate, one color intaglio: etching, aquatint, spitbite and 9 piece chine-collé
edition of 25, 16.5"x13.5" 2013

Image courtesy of the artist and David Krut Projects



<https://www.rockymountainprintmakingalliance.com>

RMPA2018: COMMUNITY/CRAFT/CONCEPT
Rocky Mountain Printmaking Alliance
4th Biennial Symposium at WSU and U of I
April 19-21, 2018

The 4th Biennial Symposium of the Rocky Mountain Printmaking Alliance will be held at Washington State University in Pullman, WA, and at the University of Idaho in Moscow, ID, just across the state line from each other. This 3 day event will be held April 19-21, 2018, and revolve around the themes of COMMUNITY/CRAFT/CONCEPT. It will include keynote speakers from the region, printmaking demonstrations, panel discussions, portfolio exchanges, exhibitions, and an open portfolio event. The theme focuses on topics that are central to artists working with printmaking, that together, encourage experimentation, dialogue, collaboration, expertise, and the dissemination of ideas. Come and participate in this growing community and learn what fuels art communities in the region. Refine your skills in printmaking and learn how the concept of craft is changing and expanding with new tools and technologies in the studio. Learn what motivates artists to work with printmaking and the roles it plays in different communities. Join RMPA in celebrating and exploring the many aspects of prints and printmaking!

Early Bird Registration Rates (through February 16th)

Professional Early Bird: \$75

Student Early Bird: \$35

Standard Registration Rates (after February 16th)

Professional Standard: \$90

Student Standard: \$45