



CHRIS JOHANSON

6.1.15

A conversation with Chris Johanson is a discussion of personal history, global environmental threats, economic disparity, and art. All of these subjects exist on the same plane, and he is constantly redefining the concept of simultaneity.

– Kenneth Caldwell

Paulson Bott Press: What are the stories behind these new prints?

CJ: This piece, Abstract Art with Cosmic Narrative, is about the journey of life. I started off doing these building block paintings with pieces of stuff all falling apart. A painting of a life with sky and outer space. It's about the structure of somebody's life. These textures and colors represent different energies that are out there. It shows day to night. I think time goes both ways forever. This body of work is about the unexplained energy that I've no idea about, but that I can sometimes feel.

Q: Is Being In My Life #8 based on a painting of yours?

CJ: It is based on a group of paintings I have been with lately, but it's more based on an idea about the self-involvement of living. These are family portraits where I try and share the subtleties of what love looks like to me. I'll probably do a few more paintings and drawings like this because I don't feel like I've exhausted it. I don't like to just do the same thing over and over again, but I do like to have the giant life body of work that I can refer back to if it feels appropriate.



ABSTRACT ART WITH COSMIC NARRATIVE, 2014

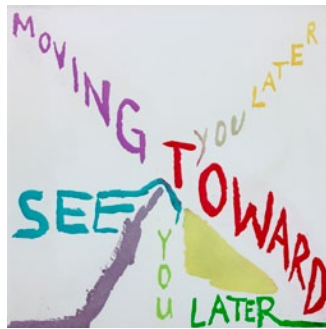
Color sugarlift, soapground and spitbite aquatints with, and hardground etching with drypoint.

40" x 44"; Edition of 35



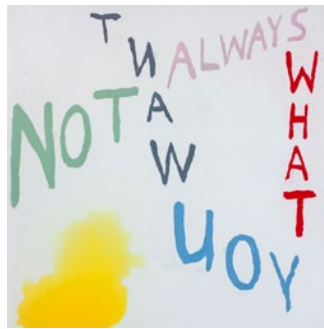
LETTING GRAVITY TELL ME WHERE TO GO, 2014

Color sugarlift aquatint and aquatint. 19.25" x 14"; Edition of 35



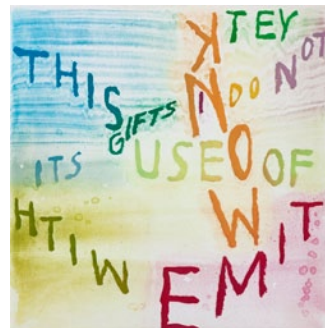
MOVING TOWARD/SEE YOU LATER, 2014

Color sugarlift aquatint and spitbite aquatint.
19.25" x 14"; Edition of 35



NOT ALWAYS WHAT YOU WANT, 2014

Color sugarlift aquatint and spitbite aquatint.
19.25" x 14"; Edition of 35



THIS USE OF TIME WITH ITS GIFTS I DO NOT YET KNOW, 2014

Color sugarlift aquatint, spitbite aquatint and aquatint.
19.25" x 14"; Edition of 35



FROM HERE TO HERE WITH WHAT HAPPENS BETWEEN, 2014

Color sugarlift aquatint and spitbite aquatint.
19.25" x 14"; Edition of 35

The main thing is I don't like to do the same thing over and over again, because I think it ends up being standardized. It feels like a chore. I'm not doing myself or anything else any good from just doing the same thing over and over again. It becomes redundant, and I'm already existential enough. I don't need to add that to my weird head space that I've created for myself. I try to make my art life practice a positive experience. Sometimes I am successful and I believe that is an accomplishment because life's weight is not always a good thing to process.

Q: So, how many pieces are you working on typically at once?

CJ: A lot. I always have 25 or 30 drawings going, because I never know when they're going to be done, and I like to put color on different things. I used to only put one color on one piece once. No matter what the work was, I would have to keep to that system. But I don't do that anymore. That was a rule that I had set up for myself.

Q: Are any of your paintings on stretched canvas?

CJ: No, everything is on wood and paper.

Q: So, you don't work on canvas?

CJ: Never ever.

Q: Where do you find the wood?

CJ: In the garbage. I just dumpster dive. I look through trash all the time. I have a lot of beautiful wood that nobody wants.

Q: Do you go to construction sites?

CJ: Every once in a while I do, but more often I find something completely discarded and doing its own thing. That's the kind of thing I'm into. I did these floor paintings at my place in L.A. with my wife and my dog.

Q: Why'd you move to L.A.?

CJ: Because I like it down there. I like the sun. There's less sun in Portland.

Q: Do you like it better than Portland?

CJ: I do, yes. It suits my temperament more in southern California. Portland is also a nice place and has its scene of galleries and non-profit spaces that support local artists and bring national and international energy there for a cultural exchange. I work with Disjecta doing The Quiet Music Festival of Portland every year. I just really missed being in the state I am from.

Q: Tell me about these pieces.

CJ: Well, this is a family portrait, really [Being in My Life]. This is kind of like my life in L.A. I am a selfish person. I just wanted to admit that I was selfish by making art that was just straight-up selfish. It was unapologetically selfish, and that's why the

books are there, they say "selfish." Yeah, the book is called Me, and then one of them is Selfish Living, and another one is Yum-Tum-Sun—like yummy, tummy, sunny.

Q: And that's your wife Johanna Jackson? She's knitting?

CJ: Yes, she does this now. She's moved around painting at the moment, so now she's more interested in textiles. She makes sweaters and I think these are like sculpture paintings that you can wear.

Q: Tell me about the little prints.

CJ: These are just supposed to be what I think are pretty reasonable thoughts to have. First of all, color is nice to look at, feels good. It's like the rainbow of color is beautiful, especially when you do these different techniques and you do little flourishes on it. It just feels good to look at it. This one, it looks like space in a way. And they're just experiments, really, but I think they're fun to read. I like the way From Here to Here, with What Happens Between reads. That's just a nice, simple short poem, and I think it's reasonable: This Use of Time with Its Gifts I Do Not Yet Know.

It doesn't matter where you are in your life, to me, whether you're a young person, a middle-aged person, or if you're dying. It's like how do you give into the unknown? ✨



BEING IN MY LIFE #8, 2014

Color sugarlift, soapground and spitbite aquatints, and hardground etching with drypoint.
41" x 32"; Edition of 35



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Chris Johanson at Paulon Bott Press, 2014.



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