

# SEARS·PEYTON·GALLERY

## NEW YORK·LOS ANGELES

### Bo Joseph

#### CV

**Born in** 1969, Berkeley, CA

#### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 *Feeding the Beast*, McClain Gallery, Houston, TX
- 2017 *House of Mirrors*, Lee Eugean Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 2016 *A Season of Psychic Noise*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY
- 2015 *Souvenirs from Nowhere*, McClain Gallery, Houston, TX  
*Hiding In Plain Sight*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY
- 2012 *Empire of Spoils*, McClain Gallery, Houston, TX  
*Fragments of a Worldview*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY
- 2011 *Pulse Art Fair: Impulse*, New York, NY (Sears-Peyton Gallery).
- 2010 *A Lexicon of Persistent Absence*, Froelick Gallery, Portland, OR.  
*Attempts at a Unified Theory*, Thompson Gallery, Garthwaite Center for Science and Art, Cambridge School of Weston, MA  
*A Persistent Absence*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY
- 2008 *Become from Someplace Else*, Froelick Gallery, Portland, OR  
*The Essence of Things: Bo Joseph with African Art*, Jason McCoy Inc., New York, NY
- 2007 *Bo Joseph: Archetypes and Anomalies*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY  
*At the Crossroads*, Soho House, New York, NY
- 1994 *Bo Joseph: Recent Work*, 1993/1994 Visual Arts Fellows Series, Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown, MA
- 1991 *Bo Joseph: Paintings, Drawings*, Studio One, New York, NY

#### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Spring Selections*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY
- 2019 Expo Chicago, William Shearburn Gallery, St. Louis, MO  
*unfoldingobject - The Art of College*, Concord Center for the Visual Arts, Concord, MA  
*Encounters I*, Christina Grajales Gallery, New York, NY  
Dallas Art Fair, McClain Gallery, Dallas, TX
- 2018 *Under the Night Sky*, albertz benda, New York, NY  
Design Miami, *re:construction*, Malcolm James Kutner, Miami, FL  
Expo Chicago, William Shearburn Gallery, Chicago, IL  
*re:construction*, McClain Gallery, Houston, TX

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- 2015 *Warp and Riff: Unraveling Rugs as Raw Material*, McClain Gallery, Houston, TX
- 2014 *September*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY  
*Looking Back Six Years - Part Two, Selected New Acquisitions*, University of Maine Museum of Art, Bangor, ME
- 2013 *Geometry Interrupted*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY  
*Portal*, McClain Gallery, Houston, TX
- 2012 *Be Inspired!*, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art at the Crossroads, Kansas City, MO  
*Confluence: Recent Work by Bo Joseph and Tim Hussey*, Rebekah Jacob Gallery, Charleston, SC  
*Shelf Life*, Kunsthalle Am Hamburger Platz, Weissensee, Berlin, Germany
- 2011 *Pulse Art Fair*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
*Scalding Hot*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY  
*Artists Ball*, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY  
*Winter Group Show*, Froelick Gallery, Portland, OR
- 2010 *Black & White*, Jason McCoy Inc., New York, NY  
*Berliner Geschichten*, Barry Whistler Gallery, Dallas, TX  
*Feed the Kitty*, Spattered Columns, New York, NY
- 2009 *Kunsthalle: Deutschland nach Portland*, Gallery Homeland, Portland, OR.  
*Winter Group Show*, Froelick Gallery, Portland, OR
- 2008 *8 Artists 8 Books*, 5 + 5 Gallery, Brooklyn, NY.  
Red Dot Art Fair, New York, NY (Sears-Peyton Gallery)  
Los Angeles Art Show, CA (Sears-Peyton Gallery)
- 2007 Red Dot Art Fair, Miami, FL (Sears-Peyton Gallery)  
*Options within Realism*, Jason McCoy Inc., New York, NY  
*Works on Paper: Lindsey Brown, Judy Huson, Bo Joseph*, Rose Burlingham Contemporary Watercolor, New York, NY  
Red Dot Art Fair, New York, NY (Sears-Peyton Gallery)
- 2006 *Greatest Hits*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY  
*Illuminati: Ellen Banks, Lori Ellison, Bo Joseph, Bernard Maisner, Marc Sapir*, Rose Burlingham Contemporary Watercolor, New York, NY  
*Bright Ideas*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY
- 2005 *Rigorous Fun*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, NY  
*Michael Oatman: A Lifetime of Service and a Mile of Thread*, The Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY  
AAF Contemporary Art Fair, New York, NY  
*Alexis Portilla, Bo Joseph, Jamie Scott*, ParadigmArt, New York, NY
- 2004 *Under the Influence*, Barbara Mathes Gallery, New York, NY

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- 2003 AAF Contemporary Art Fair, New York, NY
- 2002 *Text/Textile: Words and Weaving in Contemporary Art*, Deutsche Bank Lobby Gallery, New York, NY
- 2001 *The Art of Illumination: Medieval to Modern*, Manhattanville College Library, Manhattanville College, Purchase, NY  
*Talent 2001*, Allan Stone Gallery, New York, NY  
*Paper Invitational IV*, Woodward Gallery, New York, NY  
*Small Works by Former Fellows of 1985–2000*, Hudson D. Walker Gallery, Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown, MA; Cape Museum of Fine Arts, Dennis, MA
- 2000 *New Directions '2K*, Barrett Art Center, Poughkeepsie, NY (Juror: Lisa Messinger, Metropolitan Museum)  
*Tontine*, Hermen Goode Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 1999 *Paper Invitational II*, Woodward Gallery, New York, NY  
*Former Fellows of New York*, Hudson D. Walker Gallery, Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown, MA; Lamia Ink Gallery, New York, NY  
*Katonah Museum 1999 Members Juried Exhibition*, Katonah Village Library, Katonah, NY (Juror: Harry Philbrick, Aldrich Museum)
- 1998 *Talent 1998*, Allan Stone Gallery, New York, NY  
*Artist As Curator*, Concept Art Gallery, Pittsburgh, PA
- 1997 *Talent 1997*, Allan Stone Gallery, New York, NY
- 1996 *Featuring the Art of*, The 4E Gallery, New York, NY
- 1995 *Protective Covering*, Francis Colburn Gallery, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT
- 1994 *1995 Rhode Island State Council on the Arts Fellowship Recipients Exhibition*, Providence, RI
- 1993 *1993/1994 Visual Arts Fellows Exhibition*, Hudson D. Walker Gallery, Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown, MA  
*Open Juried Painting Exhibition*, Providence Art Club, Providence, RI
- 1992 *Rhode Island Artists' Exhibition*, Pawtucket Arts Council, Pawtucket, RI  
*Invitational*, Woods Gerry Gallery, Providence, RI

### AWARDS & HONORS

- 1994 Painting Fellowship, Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
- 1993 Basil H. Alkazzi Award  
Visual Arts Fellowship, Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center
- 1992 Florence Leif Prize for Men, Rhode Island School of Design

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### SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Guilin Art Museum, Guilin, China  
Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX  
The Springfield Museum of Art, Springfield, OH  
The Core Club, New York, NY  
Hovnanian Enterprises, Red Bank, NJ  
Integrated Capital Associates, New York, NY  
International Center for the Disabled, New York, NY  
Thacher, Proffit & Wood, New York, NY

### EXPERIENCE

2011 Artist Lecture, Pace University, New York, NY  
2010 Visiting Artist, Cambridge School of Weston, Weston MA  
2009 (1993–03, 06)  
Visiting Artist, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI  
2008 Visiting Artist, Parsons the New School for Design, New York, NY  
2003 Artist–Teacher, MFA Program at Vermont College of Union Institute & University, VT  
1999 Visiting Artist/Lecturer, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, MA  
1994 Teaching Foundation Drawing, Rhode Island School of Design Pre–College Program, RI

### EDUCATION

1992 Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting, Rhode Island School of Design

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bartel, Todd, "Collection is Cohesion," *Kolaj*, Vol. 28, February, 2020, pp 18–23.  
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<http://kolajmagazine.com/content/content/collage-exhibitions/unfoldingobject/>.  
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ill., <http://www.galeriemagazine.com/top-picks-design-miami/>.  
Weinstein, Matthew, "Interview with Our Cover Artist, Bo Joseph," *Bellevue Literary Review*, Vol. 17,  
No. 1, Spring, 2017, pp 193–194, ill. covers & p. 55, online accessed 4/1/2019  
<https://blr.med.nyu.edu/content/archive/2017/spring/bo-joseph>.  
Solandz, Simone, "Satisfying Psychic Noise," *Our RISD*, November 30, 2016,  
<http://our.risd.edu/post/153861321244/satisfying-psychic-noise>.

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- Kang, Christina, *The Collectors*, Seoul: 1984, 2014, pp. 8-25.
- Powell, W. David, "The Exquisite Corpse, Drawn, Quartered, Remembered," *Kolaj*, issue seven, February 2014, pp. 20-27.
- O'Brien, Barbara, *Be Inspired! Interview with Bo Joseph*, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO, in association with KCUR NPR Radio, podcast, accessed 6/3/2013 at [http://www.kemperart.org/podcast/2013/BoJosephPodcast\\_mp3.mp3](http://www.kemperart.org/podcast/2013/BoJosephPodcast_mp3.mp3).
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- Rogier, Anne, "Un francese a New York," *Architectural Digest Edizione Italiano*, No. 381, February, 2013, pp. 92-99, ill. p. 8, 94-95.
- , "Houston, We have No Problem," *Art & Antiques*, September, 2012, p. 35. Deliso, Meredith, "Stretching the Definition of Printmaking," *HoustonPress, Art Attack*, accessed May 25, 2012: [http://blogs.houstonpress.com/artattack/2012/05/bo\\_joseph\\_mcclain\\_gallery\\_art.php](http://blogs.houstonpress.com/artattack/2012/05/bo_joseph_mcclain_gallery_art.php).
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- Haden-Guest, Anthony, "New York Diary: Brooklyn Versus Bronx," *The Art Newspaper*, No. 225, June 2011, pg 60.
- Cunningham, Bill, "Evening Hours: Royal Doings," *The New York Times*, May 1, 2011, Sunday Styles pg 14.
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- , "Where We Are: Undergraduate Class Notes," *RISDxyz*, Winter 2011, ill. pg 53. McCarthy, Gerard, "Exhibition Reviews: Bo Joseph/Sears-Peyton," *Art in America*, September 2010, Vol. 98, No. 8, pg 135.
- Buhmann, Stephanie, "Buhmann on Art: February Exhibits Worth Checking Out," *The Villager*, Vol. 79, No. 34, January 27 – February 2, 2010. Buhmann, Stephanie, "Buhmann on Art: February Exhibits Worth Checking Out," *Downtown Express*, Vol. 22, No. 38, January 29 – Feb. 4, 2010. *Domino*, Mar. 2008, ill. pg. 82.
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- Television interview on *Art Scene with Kipton Cronkite*, NYCTV, 2007, 2 minutes.
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- Buhmann, Stephanie, *Archetypes and Anomalies*, Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, 2007 (catalogue essay).
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- McKown, Rich, "Cape Museum of Fine Arts/Dennis: Small Works from the Fine Arts Work Center," *Art New England*, Dec. 2001/Jan 2002, pg. 34, 38.
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- Silander, Lisa, "Making a Tontine," *Views/Rhode Island School of Design*, Fall 2000, p. 39.
- McCormack, Ed, "New York Notebook," *Gallery&Studio*, September/October, vol.3 no. 1, 2000, p. 15-16.
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McCormack, Ed, "New York Notebook," *Gallery&Studio*, September/October, vol.2 no. 1, 1999, p. 12-13.

Bell, J. Bowyer, "New Talent," *Review*, October 1, 1997.

McCormack, Ed, "Allan Stone Gallery Celebrates 'Talent 1997' with a Spectacular Show," *ArtSpeak*, September, 1997, p. 24.

Gross, Kathy, "Journey of Images," *R.I.S.D. Views*, March, 1994, p. 24.

Horshack, John, "Interview with Bo Joseph," *Object Lesson*, Summer/Fall, 1993, pp. 131-134.

Van Siclen, Bill, "R.I. Artists Get a Showcase in Pawtucket," *The Providence Journal-Bulletin*, Nov. 13, 1992.

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### **Bo Joseph**

#### **Artist Statement**

“My work involves the appropriation and mingling of iconic forms from disparate cultures and historic periods, often as layered silhouettes in a fragmented abstract field. It also involves an intuitive, process-oriented methodology where chance and deconstructive techniques partly determine the final outcome of the work. From myriad printed sources, such as books or auction catalogs, I scavenge images of objects that transcend cultural boundaries without losing their intrinsic charge. I transcribe and layer silhouettes or outlines of these reproductions, abstracting them to further strip away any inherent meaning or point of reference, withdrawing any cultural context. Typically, these referential hybrids evolve within environments of intuitive gestural marking. Whether painting on a fragmentary used drop cloth or a sheet of paper, I regard the painting support as a charged found object, more than just a surface. I incorporate deconstructive, chancy techniques like sanding, masking and rinsing to invoke the anomalous and transient nature of material meaning and to instigate new roles for these archetypal sources. I utilize abstraction as a means of examining how our beliefs and perception charge the experience of reality, and affect how we compile collective knowledge. The resulting works are by-products of my exploration and reconciliation of diverse cultures and they assert signs of ideological syncretism and contemporary interdependence.”

Bo Joseph (b.1969, Berkeley, CA) has exhibited internationally and has been honored as the recipient of the Basil H. Alkazzi Award and fellowships in painting from Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center and the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts. He has been a visiting artist/lecturer at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, and the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, where he has also taught drawing. His work is held in international public collections including the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO; The Springfield Museum of Art, Springfield, OH; and the Guilin Art Museum, Guilin, China. His work has been reproduced in Art in America and The New York Times, and has been the subject of two National Public Radio segments. Joseph received a B.F.A. in painting from the Rhode Island School of Design and currently lives and works in New York City.



## Bo Joseph's "Feeding the Beast" at McClain, Houston

by Lydia Pyne

*Glasstire*

December 7, 2020

*The Battle with Sagittary and the Conference at Achilles' Tent* (ca. 1470–90, Tournai, South Netherlands), for example, is a fifteenth century tapestry that is so busy and full of movement that it's hard to find a place to rest one's eyes. A spear here, a horse there; trumpets point upward, soldiers brandish their swords, blows are exchanged, and a centaur shoots his bow with a quiver of arrows still on his back. It's an interpretation of a scene from *The Illiad*, with all of the trappings of European medieval pageantry. The battle is a frenzy.

It's scenes like this that contemporary artist Bo Joseph draws from in his current exhibition, *Feeding the Beast*, on view at McClain Gallery, Houston. The exhibition is comprised of two parallel bodies of work – Joseph's well-known works on paper and his newer exploration of sculptural wall reliefs. Together, the works create a melange of history, Classical mythology, and religious iconography. In every piece, layers of meaning inspired from these other, earlier works form a 21st –century cultural stratigraphy as classic themes and stories are re-told through Joseph's media.

*Feeding the Beast* is Bo Joseph's third solo exhibition at the McClain. The name of the exhibition, Joseph explains on an artist's Zoom talk hosted by the gallery, carries a double meaning. On a personal level, it refers to nourishing his own artistic passion; on a larger scale, it connotes how society pursues its insatiable obsession with profit and progress.

The large-scale works on paper most closely resemble the medieval and Renaissance tapestries that inspired them, in both size and in the frantic tension of conflict that they capture. These pieces, made in 2019 and 2020, are all oil pastel, acrylic, and tempera on joined paper. The figures, buildings, and objects in each of Joseph's scenes are outlined in black, and the "empty" space in and around the figures is filled in with monochromatic radiating lines. It is as though Joseph outlined the figures in *The Battle with Sagittary and the Conference at Achilles' Tent*, added in classical and iconic symbols, and then re-animated the wild battle scene with the motion of the colored

lines. The colored space frames the figures in some of the works; in others, color fills interior spaces, emphasizing the silhouetted scenes.

“The means of war have changed, but the rules have stayed the same... . Battle leads to the ideological catharsis that comes with war,” the gallery’s website quotes Joseph. In the artist’s discussion, Joseph mentioned that the pieces do not refer to a specific historical tapestry or scene; rather, they’re inspired by the genre. Look at each piece long enough, though, and familiar elements stand out — a medieval–esque trumpet in *Feeding the Beast*, the Rod of Asclepius in *Chasing Ghosts*, weapons like swords and spears held aloft in *Colony Collapse*. The tension between the silhouetted figures and the space around them is palpable.

The wall reliefs sculptures in the exhibition are portmanteaus of various global mythos and cosmologies. These works, all from 2020, are casein and acrylic on resin, fiberglass, and foam. As symbolic composites, it’s easy to find the non–Western inspirations and iconography that underscores Joseph’s work, like West African masks or Persian mythical creatures. *Simorgh*, for example, takes its inspiration from Farid ud–Din Attar’s 12th–century poem *A Conference of the Birds*. Joseph’s interpretation of the poem and simorgh legend vertically juxtaposes four different birds from four different cultural traditions.

One of the themes that underscores the exhibition is appropriation, reinterpretation, and how stories are told and retold over time. *The Battle with Sagittary and the Conference at Achilles’ Tent*, for example, is the ancient Greek myth told through the experiences of 15th–century artists; shadows of those same stories appear in Joseph’s work more than five and a half centuries later. These oft–told stories form tropes (like *The Illiad*, or the myth of the simorgh) that in turn become cultural palimpsests — social texts where each telling is superimposed on its previous iteration.

In *Feeding the Beast*, Joseph’s nuanced retellings show up in bits and pieces as allusions and fragments. The works are full of shadows of a bigger, older, global set of stories.



## A Season of Psychic Noise: An Interview with Bo Joseph

Interview by Suzy Spence

Artsy

November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016

On the first day of his exhibition *A Season of Psychic Noise*, I had the pleasure of speaking with fellow painter Bo Joseph. Bo and I were born the same year and attended New England colleges where our initiation to art history in the late 80s was through Louise Gardner's encyclopedic tome *Art Through the Ages*. We were in agreement that the book had been useful (we still own our copies), and that it was regrettable to have professors skip entire chapters on Africa or Asia in the service of presenting a linear Western leaning history. I was fascinated to learn that he'd remedied this with extensive travel and research, a journey that has enabled him to define art on his own terms.

S. Your paintings seem to be elaborate systems with a range of references. What attracts you to your source material?

B. My mark making and methodology always references something real. It has its beginnings in things I am interested in, whether that is Chinese scroll paintings or Northwest Coast Native American carvings. For a while I was obsessed with embroidered Japanese material used in kimonos and *noh* robes. As a student, every time I studied a western art movement in a formal way, I wondered what was happening on the other side of the world. That led me to study African Art, Sufi Art, I took classes in world religion, Jungian theory, and I became really interested in Art Brut—I found Dubuffet.

S. Dubuffet came to mind looking at your smaller pieces. They are so densely worked, there appears to be an awful lot of medium on that paper. How do they become so thick?

B. Those works are made primarily of coated auction catalog pages. I'd cut the catalog spine off. I'd work my way through the stack of pages cutting out the objects, to create holes. Often I would cut the reverse of the page too, so the original objects didn't look quite like themselves. I'd keep the positive and the negative of the page because I was interested in the hybrid -- this idea that they were two things at once. Ultimately the negative cut outs became more intriguing to me because they maintained the contours of what they were. I used those as stencils, working with tempera paint, which was then washed over with acrylic paint. The paper got pretty brittle and pretty beat up and so I started gessoing them to give them more structure. I used them on and off over the years. When they started to crack I harvested them as the grounds for a body of work. They had this life to them, this energy of use. It wasn't the patina so much as the energy they still held that I wanted, and so I salvaged them and glued them together. A friend refers to this work as "uncollage."

S. How did growing up in California -- the colors, surf culture, hippie culture, pop culture -- impact your visual choices now?

B. I didn't grow up surfing, but eventually I did take up snowboarding. My parents were definitely looking for alternatives. They were both disillusioned with their upbringings to some extent, and with politics. Nature was some antidote to the fundamental questions they had. We did a lot of hiking, camping. Eventually, being practical, my father became a commercial photographer, my mother a make-up artist, in order to maintain a creative endeavor and keep their imaginations engaged. What it meant was I grew up around a lot of creative people.

S. We have to start someplace.

B. Yes, and I don't think it's about the medium. It's about how you think. I've tinkered with some contextual objects. For example, I used to collect tribal rugs. They'd be hanging on the wall, and they'd be interesting to me. These are rugs from eastern Persia primarily made by women who were the keepers of the visual information of their culture. Rugs are sculpture because they're three-dimensional, they're painting because they're color, but they're also drawing because they're made from lines. They are made of organic material that has changed form and as objects they become embedded with the values and ideologies of their society with deliberate moments of error in the patterns. These mistakes were meant to deviate from the divinity of perfection, which was also meant to ward off ill-will.

S. I'm glad you bring up rugs because I sensed that connection in the red and white piece *Disunified Theory: Hoarding Voids*, made of oil pastel and paint on paper. It has tiny holes in a few places. I love these accidents.

B. Those come from the scraping of the piece with a razor blade, and rinsing them in a sink. To me they are just some of the many anomalies that I invite, points of reorientation. They push back against my expectations. As the artist you're the first viewer of the work. The piece is separate from you, but you're also watching it unfold. These little anomalies indicate how it's out of my control. I think about loss, absence, entropy, and how matter breaks down over time. When a piece has loss and evidence of entropy it seems to ring more true, so to speak.

S. So you're not after perfection.

B. No, not by any stretch.

S. I've noticed a sort of mapping quality to your work. What are your other image sources?

B. In Berlin I found these sheets of antique German clip art made for children. I think they are called "abse-builder" or something like that. It's basically a sheet of paper, a whole sheet of birds for example held together with tabs. Children cut and paste them into books, but they're actually wild abstractions if you look at them from the back. I wanted to work with these on a larger scale. I had them scanned and laser cut so they were stronger and could be reused and they are sort of kicking around the studio now. I also take photographs myself and create stencils with those. Even photographs of my wife will get used. I will silhouette her out of the scene, so it's not a direct 1 to 1 appropriation like Richard Prince. When they are abstracted I see these images as archetypal forms, so that if you change their context they still have a universal presence. They keep their charge.

S. How many pieces at a time do you work on?

B. Three to a dozen at a time. From the table to the wall to the table, or floor. There is always something learned moving between pieces.

S. I've lately been thinking about regionalism. I wonder if you believe it still exists for contemporary artists? For example, I've become more aware of my unintentional stylistic alignment with Maine artists like Alex Katz, Fairfield Porter, and Lois Dodd. Can you speak to your own experience?

B. I do believe there are glimmers of regionalism, though they are often difficult to quantify, and I definitely think going to school in New England, living in Providence while attending R.I.S.D., had an effect on me. I felt a kind of unexpected permeation of nature. The idea of the small early American town was strong and there is something there about the architecture and the residue of Edgar Allan Poe and H.P. Lovecraft, some of that seemed to get under my skin.

S. We talked a little bit about painters Ross Bleckner and Phillip Taaffe? How do you see yourself in dialog with their work? You're the right age to have seen them at the important moment in their careers, the 1990s.

B. Whatever connection there was I noticed it after the fact. However, discovering Tim Rollins & K.O.S. while I was a student at R.I.S.D., that was a moment for me. I'd been doing drawings on found books, gestural ink pieces. Bumping into that work was exciting, I felt a kinship, and an affirmation. I was digesting so many art forms but I knew I wanted to make work about my culture, not "high culture". I wanted to find ways to let in my personal pursuits. For example, I used images of rugby players and when I cut them out as silhouettes they reminded me of battle scenes from murals in the Renaissance, or the marble floors of the Orvieto basilica. Popular culture started to resonate as being universal.

S. You've lived and worked in New York for a long time. Do you think the New York School of painting is still alive and well?

B. Well there's a thing about the drive and the energy and peers working among each other, akin to when, in art school, the guy in the studio next to you was pulling an all-nighter, it made you reconsider staying in your own studio later. I see subsets of it here and there. It's a common appetite, a common drive, an ambition, in the purest sense of the world. It's ambition to push boundaries, which in turn pushes things forward. But I worry about New York for artists with rising rents. It's as if the city has become hostile to us monetarily. I was in Bushwick for over 17 years from '96...watching that neighborhood evolve was really something.

S. Do you see the flaws in your work or do you see them the way I do? They seem to give pleasure.

B. That's a hard one to answer. Looking at your own work, you know the history, the challenges of making it. It's rife with all of that. Seeing it here as opposed to the studio it's almost like seeing something another artist made. I don't know if I enjoy the process. I usually come home from the studio a wreck. It's physically demanding and rigorous and the scale of my work can be hard to maneuver. There is a ride I am taking that is pretty visceral.



## Accentuate the Negative: Bo Joseph's Painted Silhouettes Reveal Hidden Connections within Blank Spaces

Artsy Editorial

April 22, 2015



Bo Joseph's complex, patterned paintings are the result of a process of deconstructing and reconfiguring forms and materials, often leaving the results up to chance. He plucks images from auction catalogues and books, traces them, lathers them with paint, then peels off said layers of paint, and outlines the fragments that remain. Several of these works, currently on view at Sears-Peyton Gallery, explore what happens when objects are stripped of their cultural, religious, temporal, and geographical contexts and assigned new meanings.

Joseph's previous shows at Sears-Peyton Gallery—"A Persistent Absence" (2009), "Fragments of a Worldview" (2012), and "Geometry Interrupted" (2013)—highlighted gaps in Western-based cultural and historical lexicons. Fittingly, many of his drawings and paintings concern themselves with finding areas of negative space and tracing their contours. Works featured in his current show, "Hiding in Plain Sight," are more radical in focus than they might initially seem. Joseph underscores how non-Western objects

experience a change in symbolic value when stripped of their spiritual or functional contexts.

With *Disunified Theory: Blue Shift* (2015), Joseph seems less concerned with achieving linear precision or what a museum plaque might call a “balanced composition.” Instead, he is interested in finding points of convergence between disparate forms—many of which are masks and ceremonial objects—and then articulating their particular curvilinear edges. The exclusively blue palette and the silhouetted items that it brings to life recall cyanotype processing. Significantly, just as cyanotypes once captured incomplete, unreliable versions of a subject, so too do Joseph’s process-dependent works.

In *Co-Opting Cryptic Signs* (2014), vibrant colors and patterns abound, exuding a Mark Bradford-like flurry of layered textures. The origins of material—auction catalogues and street-art detritus—vary considerably and lead to different conceptual meanings. The patchwork of colors and shapes that Joseph has pieced together could plausibly be taken for a crowd of people. Where faces might appear, however, there are only blank spaces, and the forms are left nameless and genderless. This lack of identity takes away any suggestion of a sociological context—and instead offers a mythic quality.

Joseph’s love of process seems to stem from a strong curiosity around form and the space around him. In his words: “the resulting works are by-products of my exploration and reconciliation of diverse cultures [that] assert signs of ideological syncretism and contemporary interdependence.”

—Anna Furman

*“Bo Joseph: Hiding In Plain Sight” is on view at Sears-Peyton Gallery, New York, Apr. 16–May 16, 2015.*

# Art in America

## Bo Joseph, *A Persistent Absence* Exhibition Review

By Gerard McCarthy

Art in America

September 2010

The seven large paintings and 20 mixed-medium works on paper by California-born New York artist Bo Joseph in this show, all produced in the past two years, are colorful, richly textured abstractions combined with figurative elements— all silhouettes made with stencils. Set against milky white backgrounds, the silhouettes, resembling heads or masks, human limbs, animal shapes and sometimes full-length figures, activate the multi-layered surfaces. To begin the process in a characteristic painting such as *Cult of the Persistent Absence*, Joseph applies many layers of brilliantly hued gestural markings, and layers of acrylic, tempera, and gesso. He then literally washes the canvas, leaving traces of texture and flashes of contrasting and interacting colors. After this stage, he places the stencils on the surface and overlays a whitewash. When the stencils are removed, the white areas become the negative spaces as the vibrant, multicolored silhouettes glow against the cloudy ground.

In *A Mutation of Differences*, one of the most striking works in the show, two large silhouettes of faces, whose angular features recall African masks, command the space at the left. Connected to each other by a thick, vertical band of color, the reddish masks are compositionally balanced on the right by a kind of scaffolding of diagonal lines in deep blues and maroon that yield a variety of shapes, including reptilian heads with open mouths and diminutive shrouded figures, a long lance dramatically traverses the composition to pierce the base of one of the masks. The tilted head near the top of *Primal Ambiguity* is similarly linked by a thick passage of color to an array of silhouettes, including abstracted figures reminiscent of traditional African sculptures.

Joseph's technique is remarkably consistent in the large canvases (over 5 feet high), as well in the exquisite 12-by-9-inch works on paper. The more crowded the compositions on paper center on easily identifiable human forms amid a plethora of more elusive silhouettes. A suspended figure with bent legs and high-heeled shoes, the focus of one work, is surrounded by horse and bird profiles, whose small size suggests toys. In another piece, birds dominate the top half of the composition, which shows a figure standing under an umbrella in a piazza-like space that extends toward a shimmering horizon line. In the smaller works, the artist leaves less to chance than in the larger pieces, but with surprising juxtapositions of form and prismatic color, he manages to effectively animate these intimate and quixotic scenarios.