



Woodstock, NY: Cross Contemporary Partners is pleased to present a virtual exhibition of paintings on glass by John Lyon Paul. This digital gallery has the illusion of 12 foot high ceilings and 250 feet of wall space and is viewable 24/7 at: <https://bit.ly/JLPaulsoloshow>

John Lyon Paul translates the benefits of meditation into a series of color-drenched abstract paintings on glass, eliciting the luminous mystery of nature and existence. Grounded in a lifetime practice of spiritual exercises, Paul makes use of both geometric and organic abstraction to focus and concentrate thought and feeling in light of lived experience. At the same time, Paul eschews recognizable contact with conventional religion. Because he is a visionary artist, his work is very much his own.

Using an underlying net or grid form, Paul lays out in his glass studies meditative pathways to deeper appreciation of nature and experience. Native American belief systems play a large role in the artist's method and formal style; his paintings are conceptually modeled on the Navajo Beauty Way Ceremony, whose purpose is to restore our natural state of harmony, balance, and beauty--in accordance with the ceremony prayer that declares "It is finished in beauty." Paul's panels record the ritualized creation of mindfulness, and may be viewed as sequentially supportive of a meditative calm, in that the eye moves from one element to the other, gradually approaching psychic balance. The glass surface of the painting keeps a record of the painting act itself, lending an autobiographical authenticity to the painterly passages and the marks or strokes of painting it contains.

Paul painted the artworks "in reverse" on the back of squares of clear Mylar, a thick, polyester film. Subsequently he moved to painting on plate glass--in part because doing so allowed the paintings to overflow their borders. Both substrates are non-absorbent and slippery and can retain the subtle intimacy of brush and pen. It is apparent that the sculptor in Paul responded to his decision to change the conventional material support of painting--canvas on stretcher--to glass by giving himself license to break boundaries and push beyond assumed methods. As a result, the studies on glass come alive and surge toward the viewer. Paul's sensitivity to materials indicates that, for him, painting is a way of negotiating relations between the artist and the viewer, rather than reiterating a genre tradition bound by its materials.

Paul's practice is often guided by meaningful, even milestone dreams. His paintings on Mylar received a jumpstart after he dreamt of being engulfed by a colorful swarm of butterflies. The visual wonder of the dream captivated the artist, who called his experience the butterfly effect--a phrase that also refers to the unspoken agreement between nature and life, a concurrence so exquisitely balanced, little things lead to great changes. The elements of that dream include a broad array of visual events: a burst of many colors; the startling occurrence of color change and linear re-positioning occurring at the same time; the involvement of a dynamic geometry, in which the butterfly wings in several directions; and, again, the meandering nature of the wings' flight, in which the wings diverge and converge and actively swirl.

As Paul moves from painting to painting, one proceeding from the other, he follows a path exploring various motifs and techniques in response to materials and visionary circumstances. Often dealing with geometry--a grid is often imposed as a way of ordering the composition--Paul nevertheless introduces a broad freedom into his art by placing patterned spirals, nature imagery, and organic designs within the frame of the painting. He is also constantly scattering



an endless variety of effects, both additive and subtractive, seemingly wet or dry, that occur to him as he works. In doing so he builds a rich vocabulary of painterly events. In consequence, the viewer is asked to become actively involved in the painting--a request that is intended to complete the painting's unfinished resolve toward a merger between itself and the person perceiving it.

Paul works within a matrix of mindfulness, and it shows in his paintings. The fusion of subjective and objective thinking is evident in his art. Because of this, Paul's paintings have about them an ease and an aura of pleasure that may remind the viewer of Matisse's cutouts. At the same time, it is clear that Paul is not directing his work toward esthetics alone; he remains a painter of spiritual energies, as indicated by the high intensity and spiritual connectedness of his art. Paul has remarked of his work: "The paintings are mysterious environments, in which we are free to move about as if we are out-of-body, drawn and released by the pulse of color and energy of line. Within them the word "abstraction" gives way to "freedom" as we surround ourselves with a vibration of color that is nearly musical in its effect."

John Lyon Paul has sculpted and painted in the rural Finger Lakes region of New York State since the mid-1980s. His *Many Thousands Gone* and *Nagasaki Prayerwheel* are prominent works of public participatory memorial art; they are intended to elicit interaction with the public. The ongoing series of *Studies*, from which the paintings in the current show were selected, commenced in 2010, preceded by several others series of paintings, including *Pilgrimage*, which began in the late 1990s and comprises 102 paintings, and the *Meditation Shawls*, a body of work produced from 2005 to 2008. In 2010, Paul was chosen as the Featured Artist of the "Conflict and Visual Culture Project" at the Solomon Asch Center, and in 2011 was selected by the NYFA MARK professional artist program. Solo exhibitions of his work have appeared at the Arnot Art Museum, Elmira,(NY); Hamilton College, Clinton (NY), Lederer Gallery, SUNY Geneseo (NY), Roper Gallery, Frostburg State University (MD), Anderson Museum of Art (IN), Crary Art Gallery, Warren (PA); Newman Chapel and Cultural Center, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy,(NY); the Barrett Art Gallery at Utica College,(NY); the University of Central Florida, Orlando,(FL); the Center for Cultural Arts, Gadsden,(AL), and the Charles H. Macnider Art Museum, Mason City, (IA) as well as many others.

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