

HALSEY MCKAY GALLERY

JOSEPH HART- *LIFE PAINTINGS*

AUGUST 2 - 25, 2025 | 79a Newtown Lane, East Hampton, NY

For further information email contact@halseymckay.com



Joseph Hart, *Mid*, 2025, Acrylic on canvas, 64 x 84 inches

HALSEY MCKAY GALLERY is pleased to present *Life Paintings*, Joseph Hart's 7th solo exhibition with the gallery. In *Life Paintings*, Hart swaps out his typical process of constructing paintings through multi-media assemblage for the classic approach of brushes and paint directly onto stretched canvas. Each painting began as a small study which allowed Hart to pre-meditate his compositions and color palettes—a procedural move he historically eschewed in favor of automatic mark-making and responsive invention. While improvisation is always present in the work, these paintings hold a newfound sense of deliberateness and sure-footedness. Shapes, contours, and compositional structure are more specific and measured. His handling of paint is thoughtful: a mix of thick and thin, surgical and hasty strikes, up against smooth brush work.

The ensuing surfaces are managed and cohesive--offering zones that shift from flat to robust. Beneath it all is a crayon drawing, sometimes peeking through, which operates as an armature, or map, for all the decisions and moves that lead to the completed painting. Color palettes are refined, leaning into subtle tonal shifts and soft hues that deliver a calming ambience throughout his allegorical imagery.

While Hart's imagery is mostly unrecognizable, their origin points are born out of representation. Forms from nature, like the curl and jagg of plant life, the sturdiness of bones, and shapeliness of bodies are combined and unraveled into wayward abstractions. Another formal ingredient is how Hart treats his own artwork as a type of still-life. He observes parts of finished works then re-creates and tweaks them into areas of new paintings. This tactic results in curious echoes and reverbs from one work to the next, and underscores that ideas often evolve out of existing ideas.

The utility and ethos in Hart's oeuvre remain steadfast. He uses abstraction to work through his conceptual and aesthetic kinks. He prioritizes playfulness and the range of ways that beauty can be interpreted. He champions pictorial space that is organized in unique and harmonizing ways. He looks for balance within tension and attempts to reconcile how complicated our visual worlds and lives are through the process of making a painting.

Joseph Hart is a New York-based visual artist that makes drawings and paintings. He is also the founder and host of Deep Color™, the celebrated arts-focused oral history project and podcast. Hart's work can be found in the public collections of the RISD Museum, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Davis Museum at Wellesley College, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. He has taught at the Rhode Island School of Design, Penland School of Craft, and The City College of New York. Hart lives in Brooklyn, NY, with his partner and two children.