

Eric Dever Artist Statement

Part of Forever

For more than a decade, I worked with a square canvas and limited palette, white for four years, then white and black for two years, followed by white, black, and red. I uncovered a remarkable variety, both in hue and composition, most notable when the work was installed together, each painting held its own.

The shift began when I let go of the square and moved to a rectangular format, there was no longer a central area of interest, but multiple areas of concentration. More strikingly, I rediscovered color—not just one at a time, but the entire spectrum, color as a painting program, the color spectrum as abstraction, the universe reflected in nature.

*Nature is the beauty of Brahman.*¹—Sri Swami Tapovan Maharai Chimmaya

This new palette began 2 years ago while I was planting a garden, coupled with an awareness of the Indian and yogic notion of the *chakras*, 7 energetic centers in the human body where matter and consciousness meet, which also parallel the visible spectrum. I found myself taking cues from flowers as they blossomed, their color entered my paintings. At the height of the summer I had used all of it, mostly mixing tints, Titanium White with Naphthol Scarlet, Quinacridone Red, Cadmium Orange, Hansa Yellow, Phthalo Green, Phthalo Blue and Dioxaine Purple. The apprehension of color stuck with me, and by the following summer I began mixing new hues.

*Painting for me, when it really ‘happens,’ is as miraculous as any natural phenomenon.*²—Lee Krasner

My painting approach also involves exchanging shapes between canvases, often through a mono print process of painting onto a surface and transferring it to canvas, techniques to intricacy which recall the invention of Jean Dubuffet and decalomania of Max Ernst. The painting *January 13th-The Women’s March*, includes a second canvas which echoes the composition of half the original, the sum implying a triptych, though actually a diptych of unequal proportions. Others include forms mirrored top to bottom within a single painting, *August 5th-North Fork*; or between similarly dimensioned supports, *July 17th, February 15th, March 1st*; and the *Prickly Pear Cactus Suite: September 4th, October 3rd, October 9th, and December 14th-Green Joy*.

*These (Dever’s) repetitions of forms and other planned elements, together with the more gestural painting of the rest of the canvas, creates a charged tension between spontaneity and organization, one of the ways de Kooning worked.*³—Jennifer Landes

Unpainted canvas, or ground as shape, contribute to an atmospheric openness in the paintings, spreading and breathing. Some sections or shapes of unpainted canvas are formally revealed as negative space, and more personally, a portal or meditation on absence, as in *March 16th-Part of Forever, May 25th-Eve’s Gift and the Jade Buddha*, and *June 21st-The Venetian Lemon, Villa Francesco*.

Automatism, methods of mining the unconscious popularized by the Surrealists, breathes life into the work, reflecting catastrophes including *November 9th*, or alternately “...an obstinate dedication to fight everything repressive in the conventional wisdom,”⁴ evidenced in *January 13th-The Women’s March*.

The use of dates as titles includes a progression from the solar calendar to events, reminiscence and homage, journal like entries associated with memory and location, including Hindu festivals *September 22nd-Ganesh Chaturthi*, and *February 13th-Maha Shivratri*. *July 31st-Franklin Avenue*, is an homage to artist and teacher Corita Kent. In *July 14th-Sherbourne Drive* and *August 26th-Glenbarr Avenue*, the angst of my youth lifts as I reclaim happier moments of the past.

“Art is healing, condensed information.”⁵—Holland Cotter

The exhibition title, *Part of Forever*, is inspired by a chapter, *Part of Forever is Better than None*, from *Kites at Empty Airports, Poems* by Joe Pintauro.

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Eric Dever (born, Los Angeles, 1962) moved to New York in 1986 to study painting and critical theory at NYU/Steinhardt (MA'88-studio art). His work since the early 1990's has been exhibited throughout the United States and internationally. Dever is represented by Berry Campbell Gallery, New York.

Dever's paintings are currently on view in the U.S. Consulate General Hong Kong and Macau, Art in Embassies, Department of State exhibition (2016-19), and were featured in a lecture by Gail Levin, Distinguished Professor of Art History, Baruch College and the CUNY Graduate Center, *American Art and India: Cultural Exchange Among Artists of India and the United States*, at the Pollock Krasner House and Study Center, East Hampton, New York (2016). His work was included in the permanent collection exhibition, *Parrish Perspectives: Art in Context*, curated by Alicia G. Longwell at the Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, New York (2017); recent one-artist exhibitions include Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California (2017); New York University, Kimmel Galleries, New York (2015-16); Molloy College, Rockville Centre, New York and Berry Campbell Gallery, New York (2014).

Dever's paintings have been shown in solo and group exhibitions in many venues, including 80 Washington Square East Galleries, New York University, New York; ARCO Plaza, Los Angeles, California; Arizona State University, Phoenix; Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock; Art in General, New York; Elaine Benson Gallery, Bridgehampton, New York; The Buddy Holly Center, Lubbock, Texas; Centre d'Art et Rencontres, Saint Just en Bellengard, France; Eastern New Mexico University, Portales; Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, New York; Heckscher Museum of Art, New York; Hudson River Museum, Hastings on the Hudson, New York; Islip Art Museum, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Marymount University, San Pedro, California; Ohio State University, Marion; The Painting Center, New York; Paris CONCRET, France; Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, New York; Sag Harbor Whaling and Historical Museum, Sag Harbor, New York; Spaces, Cleveland, Ohio; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

His work is part of notable public collections including Centre d'Art et de Culture, Château d'Escueillens, Saint Just en Bellengard, France; The Francis J. Greenburger Collection, New York; Grey Art Gallery, New York University Art Collection; Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, New York; New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, FishBridge Park; Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, New York; and numerous corporate and private collections including the Coca Cola Company, Atlanta, Georgia; Mark Hampton; Sub Zero Freezer Company, Madison, Wisconsin; and Lady Juliet and Somerset de Chair.

Dever's paintings have been published and addressed in *Architectural Digest*, *Blink*, *The East Hampton Star*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Long Island Pulse*, *The New Yorker*, *New York Magazine*, *St. Martin's Press*, *Surface Magazine*, and *The World of Interiors*.

¹"NATURE (Prakriti) is nothing but Brahman. Nature is not an entity separate from Brahman. The beauty of Nature is the beauty of Brahman. However, the glory of Brahman is reflected far more brilliantly in the uncontaminated un-artificial state of Nature. Whether in contaminated or in uncontaminated condition, he who can perceive the whole of Nature as the very form of Brahman, and the play of Nature as the play of Brahman, is the best amongst the knowers of Truth. He perceives Brahman at all times, everywhere. He enjoys spiritual bliss at all times. Even the highest unconditioned state of Samadhi attained by the Yogis is of no use for him, he has already got himself established in the state of Samadhi. He, and all his actions are of the form of Samadhi only."

In Hinduism, Brahman represents the ultimate reality underlying all phenomena.

Sri Swami Tapovan Maharaj Chimmaya, 'Wanderings in the Himalaya's,' *Glory of the Mother*. National Chinmaya Mission Trust, Bombay, 1991, pxii

²Gail Levin. *Lee Krasner: A Biography*. Harper Collins, New York, 2011, p28

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³Jennifer Landes. (2017, April 6). Eric Dever: A Year of Discovery, The East Hampton Star. Retrieved from <http://www.mobileeasthamptonstar.com>

⁴"The real purpose of Surrealism was not to create a new literary, artistic, or even a philosophical movement, but to explore the social order, to transform life itself...and an obstinate dedication to fight everything repressive in the conventional wisdom."

Luis Bunuel, *My Last Sigh: The Autobiography of Luis Bunuel*. Random House Inc., New York, 2013, p10

⁵"An Evening with Holland Cotter and Lynn Neary," Fordham Center on Religion and Culture, Fordham University, New York, March 9, 2017.

Quotations:

"Dever's work is original, high pitched and powerful."

—Joe Pintauro, playwright, novelist, poet and photographer

Eric Dever's meticulous abstract paintings are deeply informed by a discursive range of disciplines, including art history, philosophy, psychology, and spirituality. He deftly combines an orderly commitment to the ineffable materiality of paint with an expansive and sincere curiosity for the manifold dimensions of our gracefully complex existence. These two creative and intellectual imperatives work in productive concert with one another on his captivating canvases.

—Cynthia Hooper, Artist and Professor of Art at College of the Redwoods

Works by Eric Dever ask the viewer to ponder the phenomenon of change, an observation on the impermanence and mutability of life...Dever skillfully manipulates the processes of repetition and cropping to enforce this notion of the transitory as do his reworked surfaces.

—Philip Verre, Director, Hudson River Museum of Art

Elemental and exacting, Dever's paintings make you feel like he invented color.

—Janet Goleas, Blink, East Hampton, New York

Dever is a must-see...His rose breaking thru metallic black fills you with energy.

—Gail Sheehy, author, journalist and lecturer