

## Eric Dever / Biography

Born 1962 in Los Angeles, California, Eric Dever graduated from Westchester High School in 1980 with a precollege full scholarship to Otis College of Art and Design, which he completed, later graduating from California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks (BA'84).

In September 1986, Dever boarded a plane at LAX bound for JFK with \$2000 and a suitcase, to begin graduate studies at New York University (MA, Steinhardt'88). Artist Marcia Hafif, his advisor and mentor recalls, "...even in our first interview getting him into NYU art studies, I found him to be an unusual young man, and we did have a good rapport. Interesting to hear about his memories of a meeting at my loft with the class — and potato chips. I thought they needed to know more about an art life so took them to see about grinding pigments as well as what a studio looks like." (S. Ravitz, personal communication, March 10, 2017)

In the early 1990's, Dever established studios in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, followed by the East Village, working part time for over a decade in the architecture firm of I.M. Pei and Partners, while painting and advancing his own work in museum, academic and gallery venues nationwide and overseas. Highlights include one person exhibitions at the Hudson River Museum, Hastings on the Hudson, New York; Nicholas Davies Gallery, New York; and Le Cloître des Billets, Paris, France. A portion of his painting portfolio was also published as editorial content in *The New Yorker*, *New York Magazine*, *Harvard Business Review*, and *St. Martin's Press*.

"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."<sup>1</sup>

—Philip Verre, director, Hudson River Museum of Art

Dever moved to Eastern Long Island in 2002, limiting his palette for 4 years to Zinc and Titanium White, which enabled him to uncover a white spectrum ranging from opacity to translucency, while developing a heightened sensitivity to the properties of the linen, canvas and burlap, providing both surface and support in the work. In 2007, Dever was commissioned to paint a suite of 8 white paintings for The Francis J. Greenburger Collection by curator Elisabeth Akkerman.

In 2010 Dever added black, widening the range and force of the work. The new compositions were largely geometric and included grayscales, graded from dark to light. Exhibitions of the resulting paintings include, *Grey Matter* at the Painting Center in New York and *Doucement* at ParisCONCRET, followed by an illustrated essay, Rose, "Dever," *Maquinariadelanube*, Barcelona, 2011.

"After the Paris show, Dever traveled to Languedoc in the south of France, the place of his ancestry. The area, known for its savage past, was an outpost of the Cathars, a resolute religious sect that dared to defy the Catholic church to their own considerable peril. The medieval bloodshed that haunts the region brought Roland Barthes' famed Wine and Milk essay to Dever's mind, and a body of new work was born. Alchemy, transmutation, wine and blood -- an "aha" moment for the artist. Barthes' commentary on the heredity of the color red and its permutations, both cultural and ideological, provided a powerful gateway for Dever."<sup>2</sup>

Dever began testing prepared red hues and by 2012 had arrived at Naphthol Scarlet, a modern replacement for Vermillion. Working through some of the earlier compositions, relative color, so eloquently presented and discussed by Josef Albers, emerged in this work. Background painting incrementally became foreground displaying a pulsing metallic quality made visible as similar values of opposite tones were placed alongside. In an exciting sense, color itself had become material for Dever.

"...A series of eight paintings whose color he [Dever] has limited to variations on red, white and black — in effect, editing out all other colors in his exercise in artistic redaction,"<sup>3</sup> followed in an exhibition at the Islip Art Museum, *Redacted*, curated by Janet Goleas in 2014.

Recent one person exhibitions followed, including Berry Campbell Gallery, New York (2014); Molly College, Kaiser Gallery, Rockville Centre (2014); New York University, Kimmel Galleries, New York (2015-16); Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California (2017). Dever's work was featured in the permanent collection exhibition, *Parrish*

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*Perspectives: Art in Context*, curated by Alicia G. Longwell at the Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, New York (2017). His 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 also included 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).

In January 2019, Berry Campbell Gallery will present Eric Dever's second one person exhibition with the gallery. For more than a decade, Dever employed a square canvas and limited palette, white for four years, then white and black for two years, and since then white, black, and red. Uncovering a staggering amount of variety, both in hue and composition, it was an exercise most notable when the works were placed together, each painting holding its own.

"The shift began when I let go of the square, moving to a rectangular format loosened up my compositions, there was no longer a central area of interest, but multiple areas of concentration." More dramatically, Dever rediscovered color — not just one or two, but the entire spectrum, which also corresponds directly with his awareness of the Indian and yogic notion of the *chakras* (7 energetic centers in the human body where matter and consciousness meet). That began a year or so ago while he was planting a garden which included roses, lilies, nasturtiums, and morning glories. "The color was so intense, as flowers blossomed I found myself taking cues from them, their colors entered the paintings. At the height of the summer, I used all of it. The apprehension of color stuck with me."

Dever's painting approach involves taking shapes from one canvas and adding them to another, often through a mono print process of painting onto a surface and transferring that to a canvas. "These repetitions of forms and other planned elements, together with his more gestural painting of the rest of the canvas, creates a charged tension between spontaneity and organization...one of the ways de Kooning worked."<sup>4</sup>

In 2012 at the invitation of artist Robert Dash, Dever inaugurated the first painting classes, which were critiqued by Dash, at the Madoo Conservancy, Sagaponack, New York. Dever continues to actively present innovative classes and workshops at the Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, New York, where he has also spoken on the Parrish permanent collection, recent exhibitions including *Parrish Perspectives*, *James Brooks*, and Dever's own oeuvre in *PechaKucha-Volume 19*, video taped before a live audience.

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; Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock; Arizona State University, Phoenix; 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; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Dever's paintings are 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; Gracie Mansion; Sub Zero Freezer Company, Madison, Wisconsin; and Lady Juliet and Somerset de Chair.

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<sup>1</sup>Verre, Phillip. (1991), *Meditations, Paintings by Eric Dever*, Hudson River Museum, Hastings on the Hudson, New York.

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<sup>2</sup>Goleas, Janet. (2012, November 11). ex-nihilo, red black and white, *Blink*. Retrieved from <http://blink.blogspot.com>

<sup>3</sup>Lipson, Karin. (2014, May 4). Shredded, Sliced, and Covered-Up, *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>

<sup>4</sup>Landes, Jennifer. (2017, April 6). Eric Dever: A Year of Discovery, *The East Hampton Star*. Retrieved from <http://www.mobileeasthamptonstar.com>