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Jan Dickey *Passing Through*

Opening Friday April 14, 6-8pm
April 14 - May 19 2023
11am-5pm Saturday & Sunday
weekdays by appointment

Press Release

Imagine we all live on a mountain together. On this mountain every coherent idea we have about ourselves and each other is a shape that has been drawn in the thick mountain mud, slowly pouring down toward the sea. The shapes we have drawn and the shapes we have seen make each of us into something special, something that will never happen again.

For the past two years I have been drawing nothing but five-pointed stars in the swirling colors of mountain mud that run through my Brooklyn studio. I draw these stars at different sizes and at shifting angles by tracing shadows cast from cardboard cutouts held up to the light. I grind colorful pigments with a mortar and pestle and use earth-based binders like egg tempera, rabbit skin glue, casein and oil to capture them and make them paint. I spend months layering, cracking, sanding, peeling and repairing the stars. Through an accumulation of these moments, I open myself to the natural tendencies of paint, to the things the mountain mud wants to do and the places it does or doesn't want to stick to. Some of my stars look as if they have just been born. Others look like they have shattered apart, gone back into the good old mountain flow.

I am an American painter. I have star spangled enough surfaces to have earned that qualifier. Yet, these spangled canvases are far from a patriotic compulsion, and far from some insincere ideological game. I chose the star for its broad use across cultures and throughout history as a symbol of an ordered state, a state with defined borders and a distinct identity. I chose the shape as a representation of order itself.

The star has become a vehicle for me to understand the basic activity of giving definition to these paintings, and in parallel: the existential activity of giving definition to myself and my surroundings. This is an activity always in process. The edges of meaning need to be constantly redrawn as the shape of the mountain changes and the flow of mud passes underneath our feet. In this passing flow, the stars anchor space, they define compositions and ultimately accumulate into chromatic—and extremely tactile—moments of creative expression. I experience these artworks at human scale, as gently ordered spaces of meaning and feeling within the huge and indifferent flow of consciousness and matter. The paintings accept chaos and they accept nature, all while staking out precious claims on our mountain home.

Jan Dickey, spring 2023

Artist Biography

Jan Dickey (b. 1987, Bad Kreuznach, Germany) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He experiments with paint as a living substance, adapting painting methods and earth-based materials learned while painting, exhibiting, and attending artist residencies in locations all throughout the United States and in Tokyo, Japan.

Jan Dickey earned an MFA in Studio Art from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in Honolulu, HI in 2017, where he was the recipient of a number of awards including the Graduate Achievement Scholarship, the Geraldine P. Clark Memorial Fellowship and the John Heide Fellowship. He has attended numerous artist residencies, including: ARTnSHELTER in Tokyo, Japan (2019), the Kimmel Harding Nelson Art Center in Nebraska City, NE (2018), and the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, VT (2017). This year he will be an Artist Resident at The Sam and Adele Golden FoundationSM for the Arts in New Berlin, NY.

Dickey has exhibited at commercial galleries across the United States, with exhibitions in Honolulu, Durham, Boston, New York City, Cincinnati, Louisville, and Wilmington. He has been the subject of solo exhibitions at ARTnSHELTER Gallery in Tokyo, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in Honolulu and the Louise Jones Brown Gallery at Duke University in Durham. In January 2023 Dickey put on a 2-person exhibition with Himeka Murai at Muracekai in Tokyo.

For more information please e-mail dd@dddd.pictures