

# Q&A WITH PAINTER RHIA HURT



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Tell us a little bit about this body of work:

"Balancing Acts" developed out of a series of compositional studies focused on color, value, shape and weight of stone like shapes. The pigments in watercolor and acrylic mix with materials like liquid graphite and gold dust to create surprising landscapes within each form. They act as metaphors for how I balance the different "worlds" of wearing many hats—among them are mother, director of an organization, and painter.

Who are your favorite artists?

(In no particular order): Eva Hesse, Mark Rothko, Elizabeth Murray, Matisse, Katherine Bradford, Mel Prest, Wendy White, Mary Schilaro, Vivien Abrams, Richard Tuttle.

What medium(s) do you work in?

Watercolor, acrylic, wire, canvas, synthetic silk, paper, aluminum, dry pigment, liquid graphite, plexiglass, clay, found objects, photo light films, glue, spray paint.

You seem to draw inspiration from nature, can you elaborate?

I observe patterns in how materials settle, stack, and flow. I'm interested in light and color and natural phenomenon in everyday life around me. I take photos and make drawings from life. Natural environments where I grew up in Northern California, like rocky coastlines, beaches and redwood parks, inspire me. I also find inspiration from seeing how nature takes over in industrial areas. I study how objects change over time, how they look together in layers, and how they fall apart. Sometimes I see something that stops me in my tracks as I walk to work in Sunset Park, Brooklyn—a broken fence, plastic stuck to barbed wire, a blue tarp in tatters, a hole in a gate to peer through, or layered spray paint over wood, rusted metal and deteriorating paint. These things hold history, beauty, and poetry. There's a sort of mindfulness to noticing these found compositions and I love looking for them.

Tell us about your sculptures, do they represent a new direction for you?

Not really. The watercolor drawings are jumping off points for some of the three dimensional artworks. I paint in two dimensions to get a lot of visual compositional ideas out quickly.

Shows/exhibitions you're dying to see:

Just saw Elizabeth Murray's paintings from the 80's at Pace and loved it! I like seeing shows my friends are involved in, as well as shows of other artists I admire but I may not know. I'm looking forward to seeing Berry McGee at Cheim and Read.

What are your "staples" when you're working (i.e. do you drink tea, vodka, listen to a certain kind of music etc.)?

I love to listen to music. I have a range of what music I listen to from Neil Young to Beyoncé. I love strong women vocals and honest, poetic lyrics. Joni Mitchell is a staple.

Can you tell us a little bit about Trestle and how you came to found the gallery?

After teaching in public schools for many years, I earned an MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and decided to focus on a career in the art world. I worked at a studio facility in Gowanus called Brooklyn Artists Gym. When the owner wanted out, I got help from an artist and investor to keep the space going. We started Trestle as a non profit dedicated to support artists looking to further their careers. We changed the name and started four main non profit programs: exhibitions, workshops, professional development, and residencies. I am proud of the development of these programs and think their success has to do with listening to the artist community and what is needed to help keep them working. The gallery has begun to take off with collectors interested in the talented artists involved in the space, and the other programs help support each other. Trestle has all the things artists really need: community, space, and opportunities.

Your dream critique:

I mostly invite friends and people I admire to do studio visits. I am always motivated by what I learn from the critical discussion.

What's next?

Right now I have a commissioned project that is exciting to work on. I have a show up at The Yard in Williamsburg and will have work at a couple of art fairs this spring. I have a plan for a floor to ceiling room installation including the river stones and balancing acts. So, making more artwork including some free standing sculptures. I'm also interested in making public works in the future. I'm hoping to go to my first ever artist residency this summer at a small invitation based program in cape cod. I'll bring my son, and look forward to continuing some projects there as well as starting new things based on the environment.

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