

**Joseph Ari Aloï**  
*A Thousand Mornings*  
September 7 – 28, 2017  
88 ½ Seventh Avenue NYC  
Opening: Sept. 7, 6 – 9 p.m.

**PRESS CONTACT**  
Molly Krause  
[molly@molly.nyc](mailto:molly@molly.nyc)  
Molly Krause Communications  
Images: [molly.nyc/1000mornings](http://molly.nyc/1000mornings)

**Joseph Ari Aloï, who after graduating RISD in '94 built a cult following as a tattoo artist to Marc Jacobs and Heath Ledger with stints like a live tattoo residency at Deitch Projects and the credited inspiration for Rei Kawakubo's FW 2015 Comme des Garçons line, pivots to his classically trained roots with a Chelsea exhibition of 26 new works**

*Comprising six large-scale canvases, five mixed media works on paper, and 10 brushed ink drawings on paper, A Thousand Mornings is a cathartic response to a profound life transition*

**New York, NY – September 1, 2017** — Gallery 88½, a new creative space in lower Chelsea for rotating arts presentations curated by Zahra Sherzad, is pleased to present a cross-media selection of new works from Joseph Ari Aloï.

Stemming from his decades-long tattoo practice under the moniker JK5, Aloï's studio work is crisply iconographical at its core. In this new and divergent series, four large-scale mixed media works on canvas introduce a cathartic, abstract expressionist overlay to Aloï's distinctive iconography, while other pieces use text as a dominant vehicle for meditative mark-making and process-based work.

Ten ink-on-paper works, including the exhibition's title piece, use the fluid medium of traditional Japanese ink brush to deconstruct and reimagine the signature letterforms and stylized motifs on which Aloï built his body art reputation. Shifting away from the constricting uniformity of tattooing's ornate and intricate lettering—as a “counterbalance to the confines and limitations of client requests”—Aloï breaks down the letters of meaningful words, phrases, and lyrics to their most basic geometric forms. The works are “meditative, often-automatic journeys in organizing spacial planes,” he explains. “The letterforms take on an amorphous and organically expressive form. The end result has a communicative vibration of its own, devoid of my original intentions. It's a new and organic visual language.”

*A Thousand Mornings* is named for and stems from the experience of separating from a life partner and co-parent. In late 2016, Aloï moved into his own apartment; for the first time in decades, he was alone. He found solace in the Mary Oliver poem of the same name, which reads in full:

*“All night my heart makes its way however it can over the rough ground of uncertainties, but only until night meets and then is overwhelmed by morning, the light deepening, the wind easing and just waiting, as I too wait (and when have I ever been disappointed?) for redbird to sing.”*

Five mixed media on paper works in the show are based on different Mary Oliver poems, so heavily layered with gestural text that the final composition is indecipherable as written word. Like other pieces in the exhibition, minimalistic constituent elements comprise deeply complex works.

In the creation of this new body of work, Aloï's cunning professional ability to reduce tattoo clients' complex emotions and unique experiences to their most fundamental marks compellingly lent itself to his own introspective growth. The artistic process left evident by the mark-making of *A Thousand Mornings*' works is healing and meditative, as Aloï sought to find comfort in solitude and to reconcile how to be alone without feeling lonely.

*Following an opening reception from 6 – 9 p.m. on Thursday, September 7, A Thousand Mornings will be on view daily from 11 a.m. – 9 p.m. through Thursday, September 28.*

### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Joseph Ari Aloï, known also as JK5, is an artist, designer, writer, and tattoo artist. Aloï opened a tattoo studio, expanding his signature styles and approaches to lettering and graphics into work in many mediums. He has collaborated with such companies as Comme Des Garçons, Nike, Kidrobot, and Wieden + Kennedy, and his work has been exhibited through Deitch Projects, Alife NYC, and other galleries worldwide.



*I woke up this morning with a piece of past caught in my throat* (2017), black gesso, acrylic, chalk and oil pastel, graphite on canvas



*Forty seven* (2017), acrylic, chalk and oil pastel, graphite, colored pencil, and crayon



*A Thousand Mornings* (2017), brushed ink on paper



*Xenolinguist* (2017), acrylic, chalk and oil pastel, graphite and colored pencil on raw canvas



*I got you buddy 1* (2017), brushed ink on paper