



CANTWELL

Jasper Johns said that he chose subjects from “things the mind already knows,” which allowed him to focus on the act of painting. Limiting my recent series to stripes is similar in intent. In orienting my stripes vertically, I am trying to avoid possible associations with landscape that horizontal bands might have. I prefer my stripes to stand on their own merit — stripe for stripe’s sake. In my initial work as a “striper,” I modulated tones so as to hover in greys, reining in extremes of warmth and coolness. A brighter tone might even serve to reinforce the muted and circumspect quality of my palette, rather than conjuring a particular object or feeling.

With my Eurythmic series, I eased my restraint and introduced bright high notes to the base of grayish low notes, resulting in effects of punctuation and tempo. These stripes were meant to sing rather than just converse together. My selections were intuitive and not according to a system. Perhaps this may elicit outside references for viewers, but I like to think of these paintings as visual rhythms with their own individual harmonic vibration. Seeing a rhythm in contrast to hearing a rhythm is very interesting to me, and I don’t intend any correspondence to musical notes or notation.

The Eurythmic series is a reductionist’s visual idea of harmony. One stripe is next to another — each with a different value and thickness but with a sense of variety within repetition. Is the stripe straight or is there a slight of hand in the stripe where I had a split second of no control and the stripe veers a little? The weave that holds the stripes together is my hand in the act of painting. “Hand” here means everything from the actual physical holding of the brush loaded with paint being pulled across a panel to the psychic part that is the artist’s unique culmination of their life experience informing each choice of color and type of brushstroke. It’s about fluidity that comes by rendering freely a soft edged stripe.



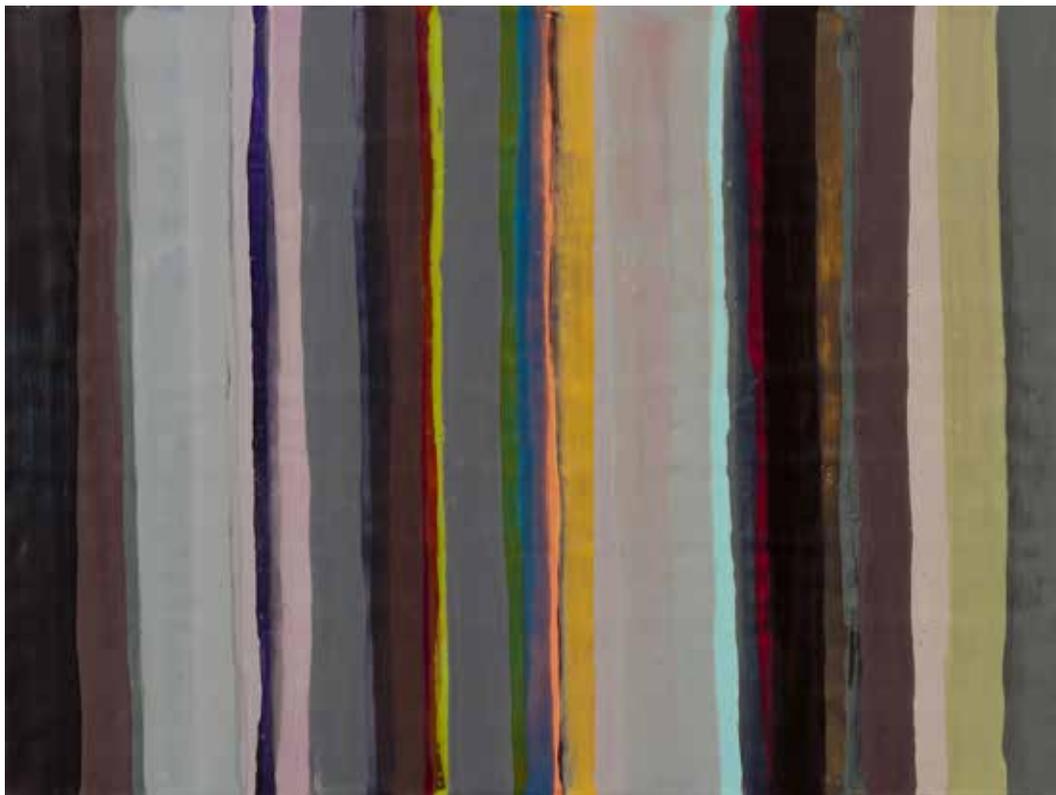
Eurythmics 1
Encaustic, 18" x 24" (2016)



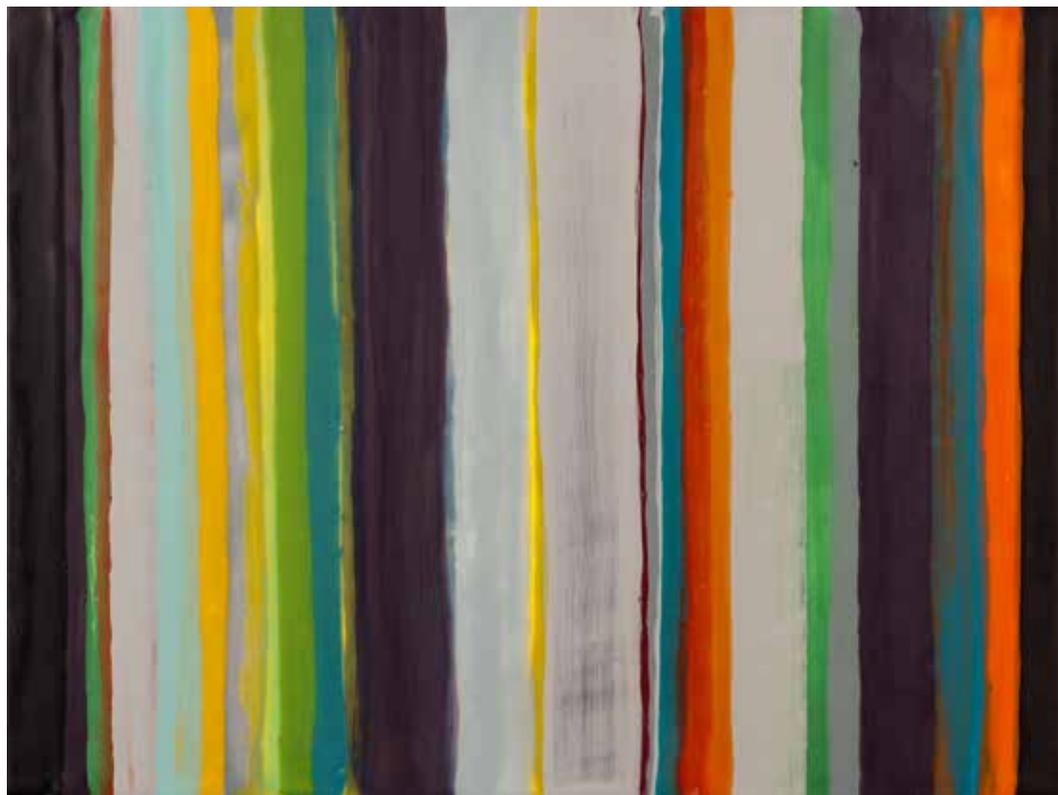
Eurythmics 2
Encaustic, 18" x 24" (2016)



Eurythmics 3
Encaustic, 18" x 24" (2016)



Eurythmics 4
Encaustic, 18" x 24" (2016)



Eurythmics 5
Encaustic, 18" x 24" (2016)



Eurythmics 6
Encaustic, 18" x 24" (2016)



Eurythmics 7
Encaustic, 18" x 24" (2016)



Eurythmics 8
Encaustic, 18" x 24" (2016)

For her senior thesis show, Kathy Cantwell exhibited her paintings of horizontal stripes in a field of one color. It would be decades before she returned to abstraction. Although the extension of a straight line had a powerful pull, her personal and artistic life took a more circuitous route. Yet throughout the years, the one constant has been her passion for making art.

Born in Trenton, NJ, Cantwell was an outsider tomboy, who lived in a dicey neighborhood with her traditional Catholic family in a house surrounded by barbed-wire and tall wood fencing. From the age of thirteen, she spent hours in her makeshift bedroom-studio. Weekends while attending an all-girl high school, she escaped to nearby Philadelphia to take classes at the Moore School of Art, learning studio skills advanced for someone her age. After earning a BFA at C.W. Post College on Long Island, Cantwell moved to New York City like many artist hopefuls and found work in the music industry.

During the day it was an Alice-in-Wonderland world of rock stars and rappers in which she might be paying the bills for wrecked hotel rooms and keeping gun-bearing artists and producers within budget, but at night Cantwell came home to paint dark, uninhabited cityscapes and quirky portraits. After 25 years of this balancing act, she left NYC with her wife, Ann Sweeney, to raise their two adopted children there in rural New Jersey. In 2010, the Cantwell-Sweeney's moved to Maplewood, NJ, just 30 minutes from Manhattan. These locations in central and northern New Jersey allowed her to become attuned to a new sense of openness light, and now the proximity to other artists and creative communities spurred her to explore new means of self-expression.

In meeting artist Lisa Pressman, she found a mentor who encouraged her return to abstraction. A sort of recovering eccentric, Cantwell is currently in a process of looking for her "inner stripe." Her latest work in encaustic has become well-known through a number of recent solo and group exhibitions, primarily in the New York-New Jersey area as well as Provincetown, Massachusetts. In 2016, she was invited to become a member of The Painting Center in Chelsea and to be represented by Adam Peck Gallery on Cape Cod.

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