

Joe Wardwell *Present Company Excepted*

FROSCH&CO is pleased to announce *Present Company Excepted*, the gallery's first solo exhibition by Boston based artist Joe Wardwell.

Joe Wardwell's work is built from many layers, combining landscape imagery with text and abstraction. While pushing against each other, the various elements create tension and energy that result in the artist's unique visually complex paintings. The abstract, the landscape, and the text imagery are as much at odds with each other as they are striving for visual harmony.

In his recent paintings featured in this exhibition, Wardwell continues to work with excerpts taken from song lyrics, Hudson River School inspired landscapes and geometric abstraction. Adding an additional element of intricacy, the artist's elaborate and highly original process involves layering of acrylic paint, building depth of color and image through spraying, stenciling, and silkscreening. The application of paint draws inspiration from techniques of hard-edge abstract painting, silkscreen posters, stencil graffiti, Japanese wood block techniques, and traditional easel painting. The paintings embody a tension within themselves through the process of covering, painting over, and then revealing. Avoiding any hierarchy across the imagery, the combination of multiple techniques and genres leads to a dynamic language that defies the norms of each.

Joe Wardwell comments on social constructs and societal problems through the mingling of text and landscape. In the past, themes regarding our environmental impact, and notions of social justice were predominant. In this most recent body of work, the phrases focus on political divisions in the United States and pandemic/post-pandemic anxieties. Statements like *Have No Time for Love or Hate*, *What is Strange Right Now*, or *Want Good Time* mimic advertising but at the same time undermine the overall message, almost like botched self-help posters from a dystopic future. These phrases are overlaid with the acidic colors of complex geometric abstraction and both reveal and obscure iconic sun drenched landscapes.

Joe Wardwell received a BA in Art History, a BFA in Painting from the University of Washington (Seattle, WA) and an MFA in Painting from Boston University (Boston, MA). He is currently an Associate Professor of Painting at Brandeis University (Waltham, MA).

Currently on view, Wardwell has a large scale wall drawing commissioned for the renovation of building 6 at MASS MoCA in North Adams, MA. In 2022, he completed his first large scale public art project for the Boston Public Library, Roxbury Branch. Wardwell has also completed large scale installations for the

Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, citizenM Hotels, Facebook, Inc. and the Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters in Norfolk, VA. His work has been exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum (Lincoln, MA), and the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, and is in the permanent collection of all three. Wardwell has been a recipient of the Massachusetts Cultural Council Grant for Painting and was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award from the School of Creative Arts at Boston University.

In addition to numerous group exhibitions throughout the region, he has held solo exhibitions in New York, New Haven, Boston, and Seattle. His work is represented in Boston by the LaMontagne Gallery (Boston, MA). Wardwell lives with his family in Jamaica Plain and his studio is in Dorchester, MA.