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Joshua Frankel Photographed by Theo Coulombe

IN THE STUDIO WITH JOSHUA FRANKEL

How his Expansive New Show Offers an Artistic Home Where He Can Share His Work with Our Community Here

By Victoria Hood

By comparing myself to artist [Josh Frankel](#), I see that he is analytical, organized, purposeful, and driven. While we both grew up in Manhattan, it is no surprise to me that he went to a far more academically rigorous school (Stuyvesant High School) than me (Spence): one offering tuition-free accelerated academics to city residents while the other offering expensive school fees to parents who want their daughters to excel in the competitiveness

of New York. And it is also heart warming to see how generous, kind, and grounded he is.

Josh kept Theo, founder of Standard Space and now my husband, and me on our toes to the lead-up of July 13's opening, yet we relished learning from him and being encouraged to improve. While I don't like crowds, I actually really hate them, I am in awe of the hard work that went into installing the new solo show, 'One and the same body', which is about *exploring how we're drawn to crowds, the pleasure we find losing our individuality within them, the joy and terror they can create, and what these profound effects mean for our conceptions of ourselves*. The exhibition remains up until August 18th, and it would be a shame to not take a moment out of your weekend to explore its different mediums. Until then, I invite you to learn more about Josh, his world, and his mind by reading the interview below.



Jenny Holzer's 1993 installation called "Marquees" (produced by Creative Time)

Where did you grow up and what is your first impactful memory of art?

I grew up in Hell's Kitchen, in New York City. My earliest memories of art are in the home of maternal grandparents. My grandmother, Rhoda, was a secretary and my grandfather, Lou, worked for the post office—careers in art weren't possible for them—but throughout their life and particularly in retirement, art was something they made, discussed and surrounded themselves with. She painted and he made photographs and wrote fiction. I feel very fortunate and grateful—including to them—for the opportunities I've had.

Recently, I've been thinking about Jenny Holzer's MARQUEES project—in part because of the wonderful exhibition of her work curated by Lauren Hinkson at the Guggenheim. Holzer placed her “truisms” on marquees of abandoned movie theaters on 42nd Street from 1993-1994. I walked past these marquees on my way home from high school. I didn't know who had done it, or who she was, but I loved how this project made something out of materials with untapped potential, engaged a public that might never go to museums, and created a durational experience as you walked down the block, towards one marquee with text on it, then underneath and beyond it, revealing the next.



Joshua Frankel, Abandoning Itself Freely #3, unique woodblock hand-printed on muslin, 18x11", 2024

When did you know you wanted to pursue your career in art? What path did you take to become an artist?

I tried to not become an artist but I failed. At Williams College, I took classes in every subject I thought I might like majoring in, and one by one I eliminated them all, except Art.

When I graduated I thought I'd work in film—thinking that would be creative, visual and would include a version of the camaraderie I experienced creating sets for theater in high school. I taught myself animation, visual effects and various computer graphics tools, ended up doing work for advertising and Hollywood features, and caught a bug for filmmaking.

In my mid-twenties, I quit my job and made my first experimental film—animated bicycle messengers weaving through live action traffic that I shot on consumer video camcorders. Using our bathroom as a darkroom, with the help of my then-girlfriend-now-wife, Eve Biddle, I made silkscreen prints that were variations on animation frames from that film.

Since then, I've kept making art. Each project of mine tends to have a video or film component as well as physical works in conversation.



Theo Coulombe, Ayana Evans and Tsedaye Makonnen at the Wassaic Project, 2021

When did you move up to Wassaic, NY and why?

Eve, along with Bowie Zunino, Jeff Barnett-Winsby and Elan Bogarín, started the Wassaic Project. It began as a Festival in 2008—that's when we started spending time up here and falling in love with this place.

Over time, the Wassaic Project grew into the established Hudson Valley arts institution that it is today.

What I didn't fully understand, when Eve told me she wanted to do this, was how deeply meaningful the community it would generate would be—between both artists and neighbors—including both the folks in town and the larger art community here, like you, Theo and Standard Space.

We bought a home here in 2013, following the lead of our friends Adam and Lauren (aka Ghost of a Dream). In 2020 we quarantined here and began fixing up a barn on our property to become our studio. Once we began working in that studio—it was clear that our family was here to stay.

This show would not be the same without the Wassaic Project or my family—we don't have a printing press, so I printed the woodblock prints on the slab roller in the Wassaic Project ceramics studio, which was my nine year-old son Kodiak's idea!



Joshua Frankel, *Within the crowd there is a quality*, Single channel video, 2 minutes, Dimensions variable. (On view: 10' x 5.6'), 2024

How does it feel to have your second solo show at Standard Space? What is the inspiration behind the works?

I am very happy with this show. This past fall, I had a large scale four-channel video work on view at New York City's new Moynihan Train Hall, commissioned by [Art for Amtrak](#). Other artists in this series include Derrick Adams, Shahzia Sikander and William Kentridge. In conjunction, I had a solo show at [HESSE FLATOW](#) in Chelsea.

This exhibition at Standard Space is expansive and offers an artistic home where I can share this work with our community here—not only what was in New York, but also how the body of work has evolved and grown since then. It includes a longer version of the video, and newer works—video works that relate as well as unique woodblock prints on muslin—a new medium for me.

The work is about crowds—how we're drawn to them, the pleasure we find losing our individuality within them, the terror and joy they can create, and what these profound effects mean for our conceptions of ourselves. I began thinking about this subject... in quarantine.



Joshua Frankel, Exposed to everything and attracting everyone, Mixed media, Dimensions variable, 2023

Tell us about your choice to use different mediums?

I love opportunities to look at one subject through different lenses. There's never a single truth, but rather many different imperfect truths.

A few years back the Sharon Playhouse mounted a production of Checkhov's *Uncle Vanya* in which four actors played Vanya simultaneously, each reciting lines from a different English translation of the play. It was brilliant.

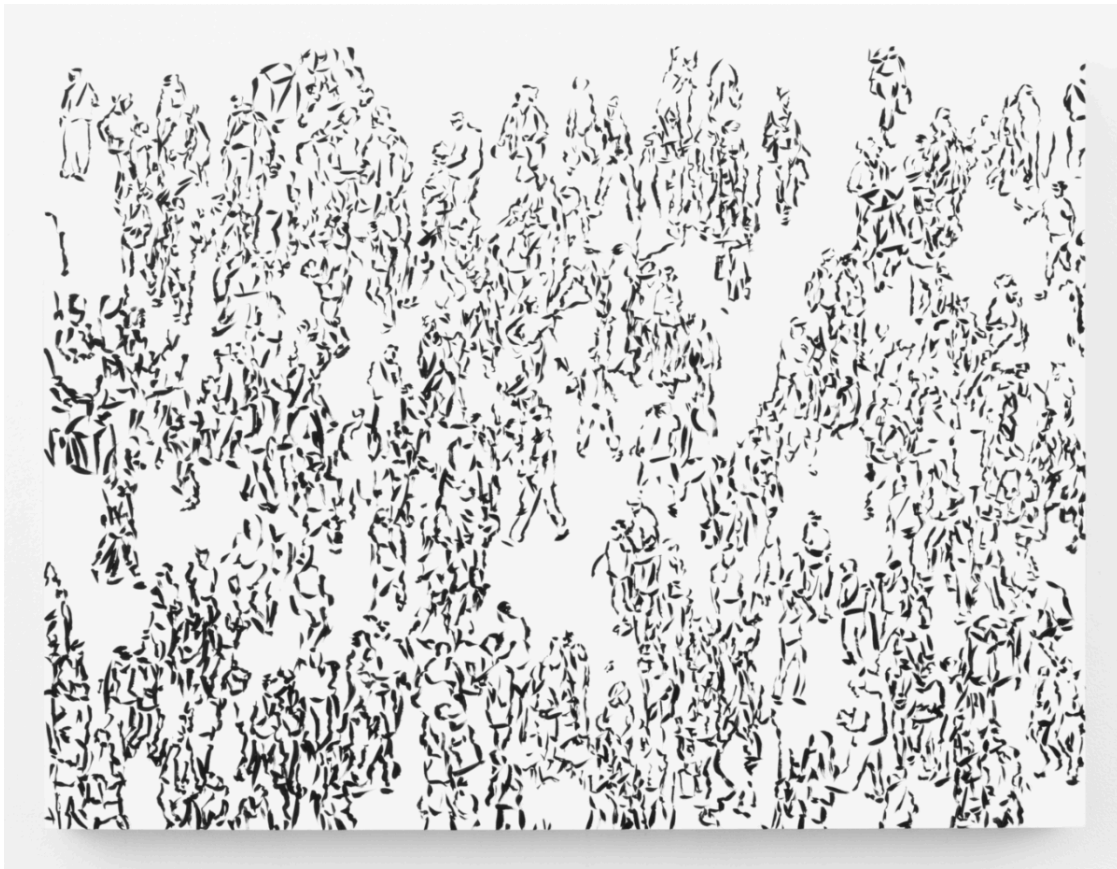
I also love Todd Haynes' film about Bob Dylan, *I'm Not There*, in which six different actors play Dylan, including a woman and a child, and often look nothing like him. It might be my favorite biopic.



Joshua Frankel, Before they can find words for it #1, unique woodblock hand-printed on muslin, 18x11", 2024

What is your favorite piece in the show and why?

Don't ask me to pick my favorite child! I'll share that the woodblock print of oysters is the newest, so it has a certain glow in my eyes. I deeply love the kinetic energy captured in the paintings. And lately I've been mesmerized by the hypnotic depths of density in the crowd woodblocks.



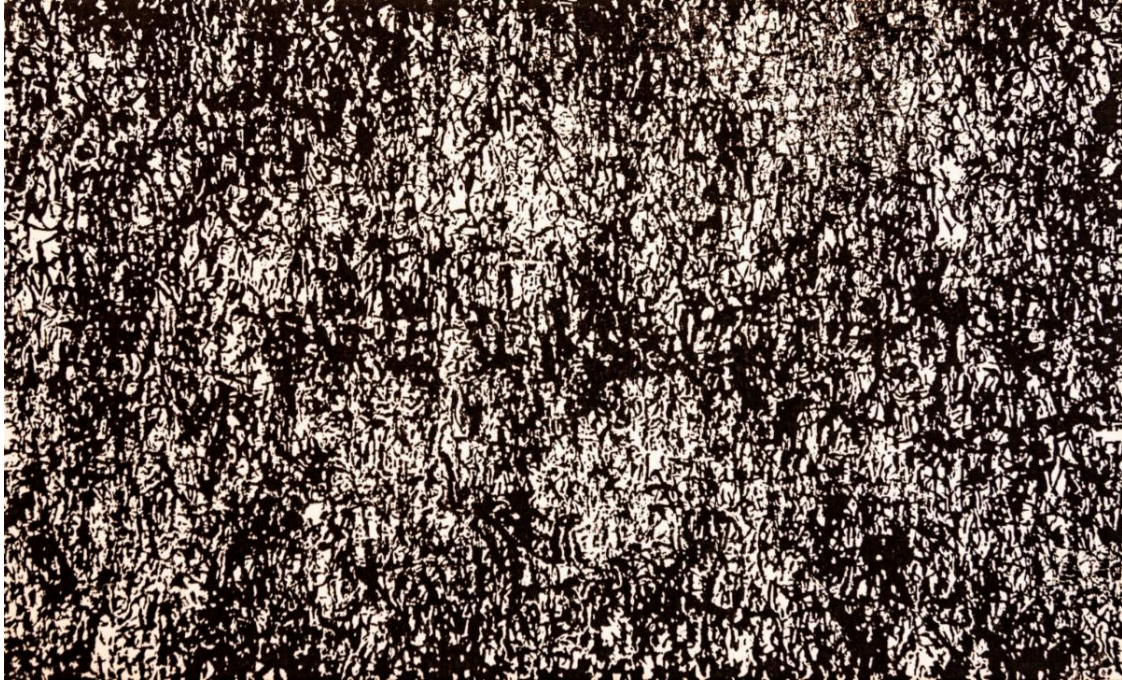
Joshua Frankel, They feel them as they feel themselves (#6), acrylic on panel, 24x18",
2023

What do you have next on the horizon?

I've been working for a number of years on an opera about Jane Jacobs and Robert Moses with animation throughout called *A Marvelous Order*. The world premiere in 2022 received an excellent [review](#) in *The Wall Street Journal* and a tour is on the horizon.

I plan to make some large cyanotypes this summer, related to *A Marvelous Order*, exposed in the sunlight of Wassauc and developed in water from beneath our feet.

I'm also continuing to explore the subject of crowds, and developing a new series of video works about listening.



Joshua Frankel, Once it really absorbed all people #2, unique woodblock hand-printed on muslin, 18x11", 2024

Any last words of advice to aspiring artists?

Make work that only you can make. In addition to that work, also make community.

Standard Space

147 Main Street, Sharon, CT 06069

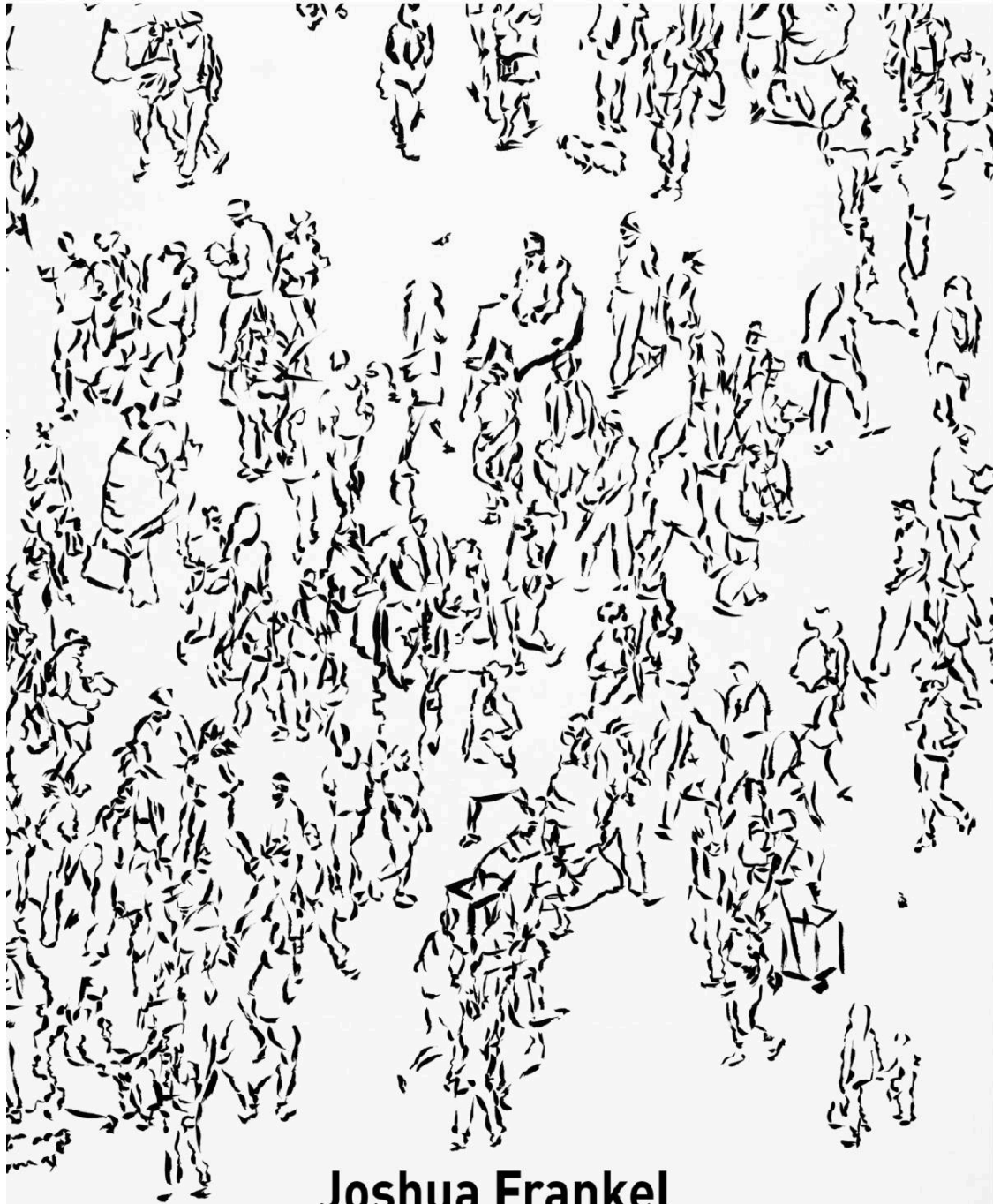
Friday - Sunday from 12-5PM

Tuesday - Thursday by Appointment

Monday Closed

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Joshua Frankel
One and the same body

July 12th - August 18th - 2024



Reception: Sat, July 13th 4:00 - 6:00pm

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