

Exhibit brings spotlight to LOUISA CHASE

The art of Louisa Chase (1951-2016) is represented in the permanent collections of many prominent museums throughout the United States, including the Whitney Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Art, the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.



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Yet, for many, her name may not be as recognizable as some of her peers and mentors of the period: Philip Guston, Elizabeth Murray and Susan Rothenburg. It is perhaps due to Chase's relentless willingness to go against the grain of artistic trends, along with her experimentation with numerous media, that she is not a better-recognized name in the canon of contemporary art.

Dickinson College's Trout Gallery currently has on display a wide selection of paintings, drawings and prints by Chase, which makes the case for a more prominent recognition of her oeuvre. "The Boundaries Imagined – Louisa Chase: Paintings, Drawings, Prints 1975-2003," curated by Dickinson College students Isabel Frangules, Ben Goodrum, Zander Holt and Xenia Makosky under the direction of Professor Melinda Schlitt, offers new research and analysis of works by Chase. Her works are on loan from the gallery Hirschl & Adler Modern in New York City.

During her career Chase pivoted among oil painting, drawing and printmaking, often blurring the lines between abstraction and figuration. She is often thus associated with the Neo-Expressionism and New Image Painting movements of the era. Her work often is wildly gestural, filled with mark-making and bold coloration. Yet, it is tempered with elements of geometric design and figural representation. However, the figurative element is left fragmented (such as body parts in isolation) or implied, separating her



FROM THE ESTATE OF LOUISA CHASE, COURTESY OF HIRSCHL & ADLER MODERN, NEW YORK.

Louisa Chase (1951-2016), *Wave*, 1982, oil on canvas, is on display at Dickinson College's Trout Gallery until April 6.

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works from more literal depictions of form and figure.

In "Untitled (Hands)," a color etching on woven paper, these elements find a blend of chaos and order. The primary-colored geometric blocks provide a solid base to the work while frenzied, non-literal "primitive" hand shapes cover the paper. One wonders, if the hands portrayed, are a nod to her strong use of the gestural process.

Some of Chase's earliest works on display, a group of four woodcuts from 1983, are the most figurative of the exhibition. Drawing on inspiration from German Expressionism of the early 20th century and Japanese printmaking, Chase experiments with color

and form. In "Untitled (Thicket)," a disembodied torso is enmeshed a dense forest growth in nature's palette of browns and greens. "Chasm" features a pair of feet standing on the jagged edges of a cliff, peering down into the nothingness, a point emphasized by the darkest of black coloration.

A trio of small canvases using only two colors layered over top of one another appears to use a technique that has scraped the top layer to expose the color beneath. The act of pulling the thick lines across the canvas leaves chunks of paint on the canvas to create a unique texture. While two of these oil paintings are left "Untitled," the third "FACE to ECAF Study" has faces as well as words in black and white. This is notable as it is the only piece in the exhibit that contains words and an allusion to the face. As noted, more often Chase's works depict hands, feet and torsos, implying figure without representation.

One of the larger pieces on display, "Wave" is an oil painting awash in blue in white mixed and swirling much in the same way

as the water naturally moves. The perception of motion is undeniable, as black accent lines reinforce the crashing waves and swirls, yet upon closer inspection, one sees Chase's familiar hands and torso imagery amidst the currents. One gets a sensation of feeling or emotion from Chase's work. In her writings, she referred to her desire to express the intangible in her art. Chase is invoking with her imagery powerful forces without placing reliance on authentic realism, relying on the viewer to make the connections.

Chase draws on many influences of Modern Art, from Piet Mondrian's spare geometry of primary colors and black and white to Cy Twombly's energetic, loose gestural, almost scribble-like mark-making. While one can see these and other artistic inspirations within her work, Chase's pieces are not derivative, they synthesize the elements into a unique whole.

Chase's work, while drawing on similar themes and inspirations, also shows a restless desire to continue to explore and evolve her practice, never resting on her laurels. This exhibit offers a visually stunning introduction for many into Chase's work and additionally, makes a case for Chase's wider recognition in the art world.

"The Boundaries Imagined – Louisa Chase: Paintings, Drawings, Prints 1975-2003" is on display until April 6, at the Trout Gallery located in the Emil R. Weiss Center for the Arts on the Dickinson College campus, 240 W. High St., Carlisle. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Saturday. The gallery is free and open to the public. For more information on the exhibition, visit www.troutgallery.org.

Joseph George holds a degree in history and art history from Dickinson College. He and his wife, Barrie Ann, have spent over 30 years together traveling and visiting art galleries locally and throughout the world. They have been writing about the art scene locally and internationally for over ten years. Their tastes range from fine art to street art.