

# Overview

## MARY HEILMANN



*Yellow Lineup*. Color sugar lift aquatint with spit bite and aquatint on gampi paper chine collé. 12-x-10-inch image on 18-x-15-inch sheet. All images printed in 2017 by Sam Carr-Prindle in editions of 30. Visit [crownpoint.com](http://crownpoint.com) for prices and information.

“I think about making art as having a kind of conversation. As the years go on, the conversation opens up; you attract more and more colleagues, more and more friends.” Mary Heilmann made that remark in an interview for *Art News* in 2007. That year, critic Peter Plagens wrote, “If Heilmann hasn’t single-handedly revived abstract painting, she’s at least kept it honest for the last thirty years or so.” Looking back into Crown Point’s history, I see that Heilmann did her first project with us in 1998 and another in 2006. This year, 2017, I’m happy to tell you that her third etching project is ready.

Mary Heilmann was born in San Francisco. Her family moved to Southern California when she was a child, but by the age of thirteen she was back in San Francisco, attending a

Catholic girls’ school. Since the early 1970s she has lived in New York City. Abstract painting was starting to shift from large to (comparatively) small scale, and Heilmann participated in creating that shift.

In 2017 Roberta Smith in the *New York Times* describes Heilmann’s paintings as “bold and obvious,” “magical,” and “mysterious.” Ten years earlier, in 2007, Dodie Kazanjian had explained in *Vogue* that (Heilmann’s) “casual approach to abstraction has had a big influence on the return to painting by younger artists.” Over all this time, Heilmann has remained influential.

What does it mean to be influential? Heilmann’s art is so straightforward that it is hard to visualize a young painter imitating it. But influence is more about attitude than imitation;



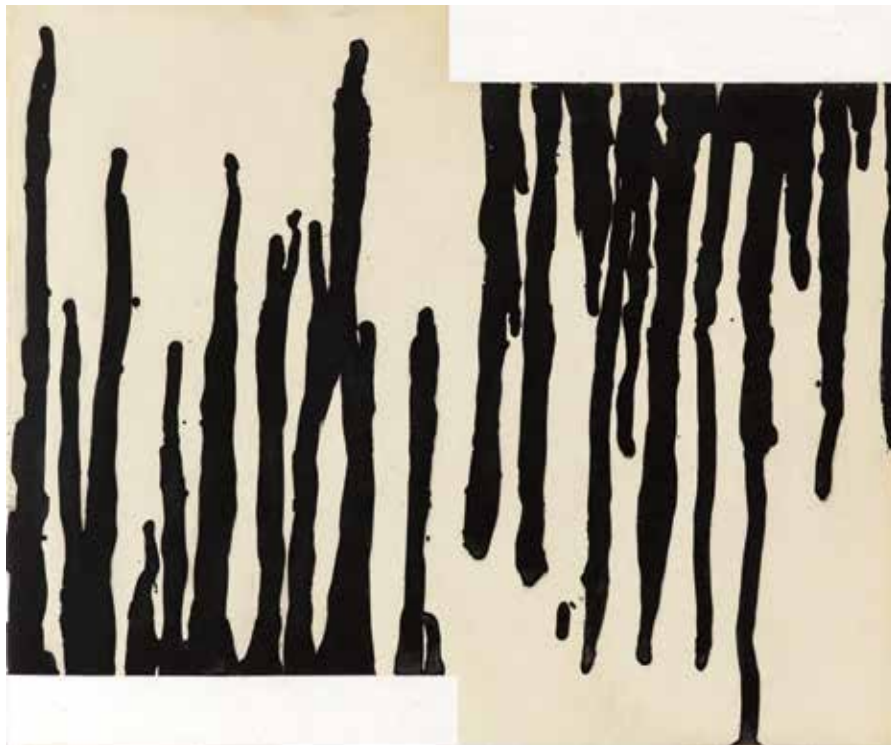
*New Lineup*. Color sugar lift aquatint with spit bite and aquatint on gampi paper chine collé. 12-x-10-inch image on 18-x-15-inch sheet.

Heilmann is flexible in her attitude toward her art. In 2009, for example, she had a major show at the New Museum in New York, mixing furniture and ceramics with her paintings. And, in 2015 she showed colorful hand-built chairs as part of the first exhibition at New York's Whitney Museum after it moved to the "meatpacking district" from uptown.

"Heilmann's big ideas and promiscuous use of different media have made her a hero for a new generation," wrote Jason Farago in 2016 in London's *The Guardian*. He was reviewing a Mary Heilmann exhibition in the Whitechapel Gallery. "Make a list of the most ambitious painters working in the US," Farago continued. "Julie Mehretu, Laura Owens, Jacqueline Humphries, Charline von Heyl—and it will be a while before you hit a man's name." (That is his list in full; all four have worked at Crown Point Press.)

Heilmann's art is in fact part of a long-term Crown Point conversation. An etching from a 1998 project has been hanging in the bedroom of my home since shortly after she created the work nineteen years ago. It has a resemblance to the *Lineup* group you see here, and is titled *Ocean* (it is blue). My husband and I have a lot of art available to us, and our apartment is small; we switch out the art fairly often. But *Ocean* has remained.

Heilmann's new *Lineup* works are not radically different from *Ocean*. Sometimes her titles suggest figuration, some-



*Rain Reverse*. Color sugar lift aquatint with spit bite and aquatint on gampi paper chine collé. 10-x-12-inch image on 16-x-17-inch sheet.

times not. In this new group of works, for example, there is a smaller version of *Rain Reverse* that is titled *Red Reverse*. *No Passing* is figurative, and the three *Lineup* images are not.

At Crown Point, as I pulled out my video camera, Heilmann laughed and said, “Uh oh, everybody’s going to know;” she was clearly comfortable with my activity.

The three-minute video is on crownpoint.com. You can see her working. After she hands two plates to printer Sam Carr-Prindle, he wonders how they fit together. Heilmann says she is wondering the same thing. The wall fills gradually. She is combining, recombining, and changing the colors of a set of same-size plates. You see yellow brushstrokes. She adjusts greens to dominate one image, blue-greens for another. A black-ink version is abandoned. Three new images of different sizes appear, each with its own plates. As the studio pin-wall fills, Heilmann’s enthusiasm increases. “Wow,” she says as she sees what turned out to be the final prints. “Wow!”

—Kathan Brown



*Lineup 2*. Color sugar lift aquatint with spit bite on gampi paper chine collé. 12-x-10-inch image on 18-x-15-inch sheet.



*No Passing*. Color aquatint. 10-x-12-inch image on 16-x-17-inch sheet.

# Crown Point Press

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Mary Heilmann at Crown Point Press, 2017. On our website, you can watch a 3½-minute video of the artist working on her most recent etchings.



*Red Reverse*. Color sugar lift aquatint with spit bite and aquatint on gampi paper chine collé. 6-x-6-inch image on 10½-x-10-inch sheet.

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