



Alphabet: Primary, 2007. Color soap ground and sugar lift aquatints with hard ground etching. Paper size: 29 x 53"; image size: 20 x 45". Edition 20.

Pat Steir

Alphabet: a series of three color etchings printed by Emily York.

Usually when I write essays about new Crown Point prints the work is lying on a table or pinned, a little ruffled, to the studio wall, but Pat Steir's 2007 prints are already hanging in the gallery. I've just spent some time in there, and I am feeling delighted and uplifted. So much art these days is soggy or sad or fierce or mean-spirited that the beauty and assurance of Steir's work is pleasurable beyond expectation. If you are tempted to think pleasure is light-weight, you have only to look at these works, even in reproduction, to see that they are dense. It is astonishing that despite their density they seem to contain great volumes of light and air.

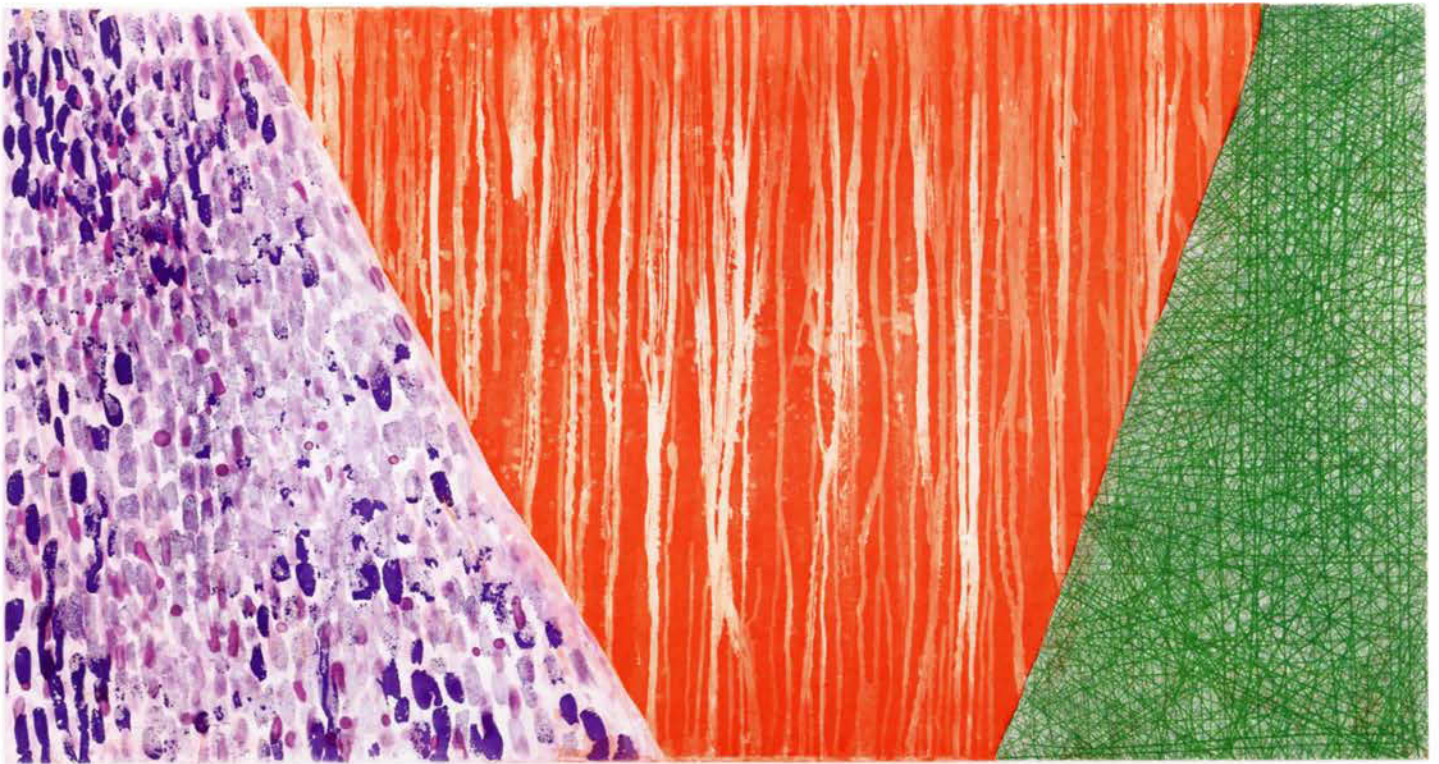
Steir is an intellectual, and sometimes speaks about her work theoretically. She starts with a concept, she says. "I take the brushstroke, an icon of abstract painting, and let gravity play with it so it becomes an image." She talks about "color related to meaning" and the illusion of deep space. She titled this new series of prints *Alphabet*, with the individuals titled *Primary*, *Secondary*, and *Grisaille*, with the painter's elementary color palette. But take a look. *Grisaille* is not simply black, white, and shades of gray. There is green-black, and green-gray, and silver, and printed white, pebbly in texture. *Secondary* has two kinds of purple, brilliant flame orange, and forceful green drypoint lines over a delicate hard ground tangle. And *Primary*, "two sides and an abyss" as Steir describes it, is red, yellow, and blue for

sure, but full of subtle textures, different from those of the enormous painting that inspired it.

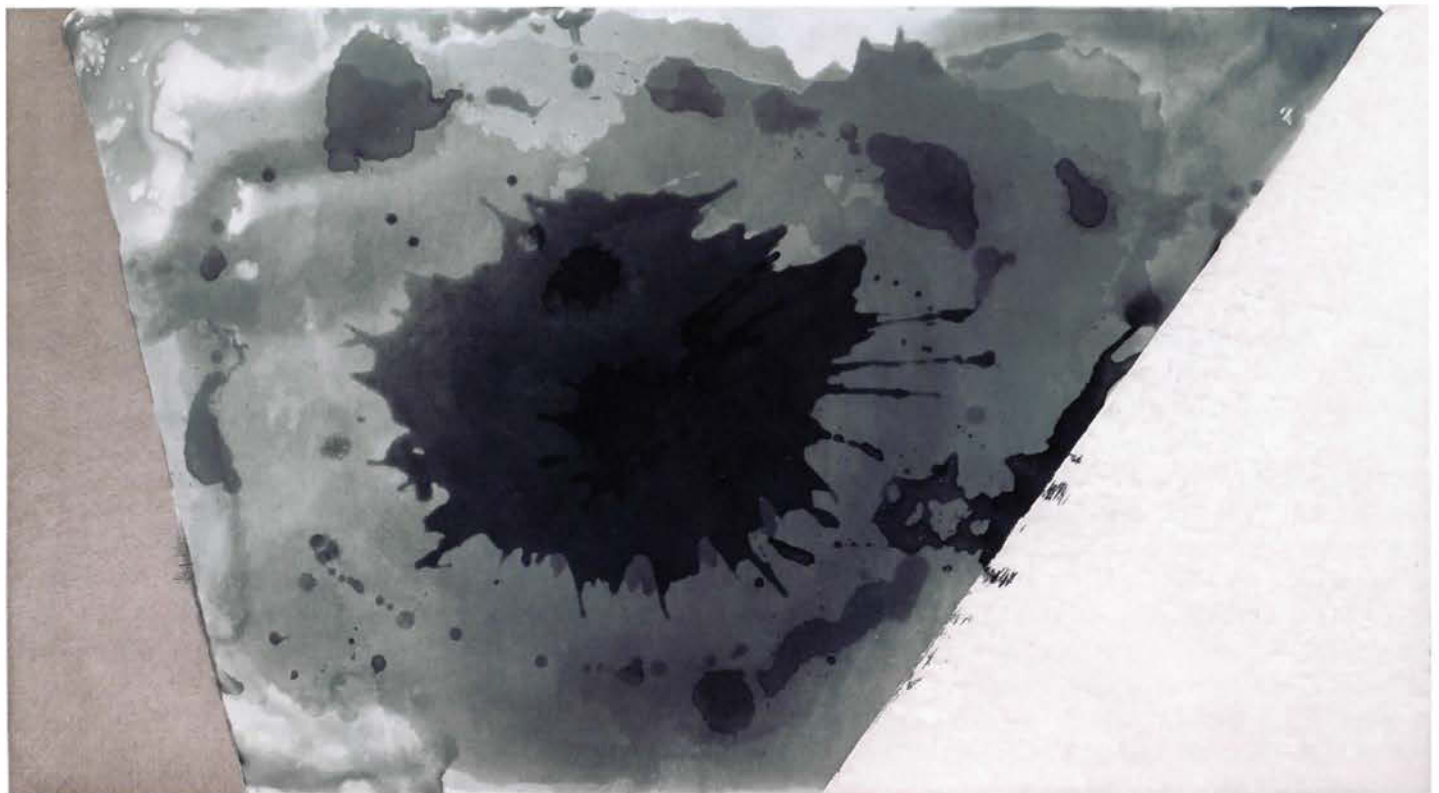
Usually Steir's paintings are very large scale. Her prints, however, are made to be contemplated in spaces where engulfing a viewer isn't practical. Each print is a gem, glowing on the wall, dense and still despite the energy of its marks.

Steir has worked regularly at Crown Point since 1977, and over that time she has shifted gradually from intending to investigate mark-making as a symbol or sign to intending to do something that evokes an image but involves concentrating mainly on the activity of marking. She is very much aware of the time in which she lives, its art and ideas, but she sticks her neck out and extends those ideas whatever which way, so her art doesn't look like anyone else's. As Herbert Muschamp wrote in *Vogue* in 1990, "Steir has managed to sidestep the movements and factions that have snared so many of her contemporaries." She is one of America's master artists, with paintings in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in her home city of New York, as well as in many other collections around the world. I am delighted to introduce to you her newest etchings, and proud of Crown Point's long association with her.

—Kathan Brown



Alphabet: Secondary, 2007. Color soap ground, sugar lift and spit bite aquatints with drypoint and hard ground etching. Paper size: 33 x 53"; image size: 24 x 45". Edition 20.



Alphabet: Grisaille, 2007. Color spit bite aquatint with aquatint. Paper size: 33 x 53"; image size: 24 x 45". Edition 20.