

# Evans Encaustics Newsletter

THE BUZZ

April 2008

## THE AWE EDUCATION ISSUE - Artists Working in Encaustic

Taxes done, Spring sprung, and new learning is in the air. Here are some ideas to expand your repertoire, beginning with a review from Joanne Mattera of a Jasper Johns exhibit and followed by three learning opportunities in the months ahead.

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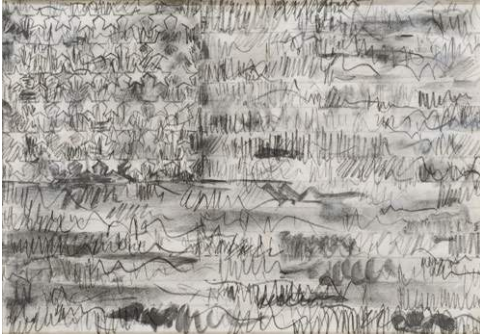
## Jasper Johns: Gray (And A Little Bit of Color)

Jasper Johns: Gray (And A Little Bit of Color)

There's always a lot of work by Jasper Johns on view in New York City, but right now there's more than usual: a big show of paintings at the Met and a more modest show of work on paper at the Matthew Marks Gallery in Chelsea. Let's take a look.

At the Metropolitan Museum of Art: [Jasper Johns: Gray](#)

Johns typically created gray versions of all of his paintings, shadow twins that shoulder much of the somberness, introspection and gravitas of his oeuvre. Grisaille was not uncommon in the work of artists of previous generations—think Braque and Picasso, for instance—but it is highly unusual for an artist to have created an entire achromatic oeuvre. That's what you'll see in this exhibition: a career retrospective as depicted in the narrowest sliver of hue. It's like peeking through a crack in the door and finding a world that's strangely familiar and thrillingly foreign at the same time. The gray flag below, drawn in graphite and graphite washes, is such an example.



Jasper Johns in gray: a familiar image in unfamiliar hues

I've written about the show on my blog in a post called [State of Grays](#), which I invite you to visit, so I'll try to keep from creating a doppelganger version here.

In one of the first galleries of the exhibition there are a couple of small targets in encaustic. I'd never seen them before. Maybe it's their size, but the work pulled me in so close I found I was almost breathing on them. Typically, though, I found the paintings, both in encaustic and in oil, the least interesting of his work. As I said in the blog, those grays are the paint version of the Roach Motel: the color goes in but it doesn't come out. The paint is dull, leaden. Ironically, the embossed and cast-metal versions of his paintings, including in lead, are richly tonal, and the drawings and prints are smoky, foggy,

velvety--all manner of deep, warm and rich. The depth of expression--all those targets, flags, numbers, crosshatches--in a range of mediums is what I like best about the show. You see how medium affects the outcome of a work, and yet the work is never about the medium.

As for those encaustic grays, there are some wonderful exceptions. The diptych *The Dutch Wives* is a marvel, with clear medium offering a tantalizing peek into the painting right through to the collaged newsprint ground, the newsprint having so mellowed that an amber glow warms the entire surface. There are restrictions on reproducing Johns's work, but you can see this painting and others, on the [Met website](#) , where full information is given for each work, or on the [New York Times slide show](#) , which offers a nice selection of images but not too much information.

The show is up through May 4.



Jasper Johns: *The Dutch Wives*, 1975, encaustic and collage on canvas; two panels, overall 51.75 x 71 inches

In Chelsea: [Jasper Johns: Drawings 1997-2007](#)

Let's continue downtown to [The Matthew Marks Gallery](#) on 22nd Street where this work-on-paper show was up through April 12.

The gallery, a former taxi garage, is now the ultimate in white cubes, with some natural light filtering in through the glass overhead doors and more pouring down from the skylights. The show covers a range of work on paper, including paintings, drawings and prints. There's more color here.

Here's an installation view that I shot (the gallery has a larger selection on its website):



Installation view of Jasper Johns: Drawings 1997-2007, at the Matthew Marks Gallery, Chelsea

If you walk into one of the back galleries, you'll see several sculptures that have been cast from number paintings. There were a few versions in lead in the Grays show at the Met, but I couldn't show them to you because of it's no-no-no-I-mean-no-photo policy. Here, I could shoot. This one is in bronze:

Below is a detail, with the wax drips of the original painting still very much in evidence. When I interviewed the artist for Women's Wear Daily in 1986, one of the things he did was "paint" for the photographer, who needed to get a few action shots. (I was mortified at her request, but he generously complied.) As he painted, a bit of the encaustic dripped.



Johns picked up a palette knife and wordlessly scraped it off. So when I see drips on his work, I assume they have remained intentionally. I love how they break the regimentation of the numbered grid.

Want to see and read more?  
Check out the roundup of recent  
reviews on the blog [Two Coats  
of Paint](#).

--Joanne Mattera



### **JEFF SCHALLER: Master Class**

Saturday and Sunday, October 11 and 12, 2008 Sonoma, CA

For the first time, Jeff has agreed to teach his technique of creating encaustic paintings with a unique approach to realism and lettering. Jeff visually commemorates a familiar era and brings a most modern interpretation. His success has brought international acclaim. Jeff's charm and teaching skills promise participants an exciting demonstration on Saturday and optional hands-on master class on Sunday. Email [hylla@comcast.net](mailto:hylla@comcast.net) for details and registration. Class size is limited.





#### ADVANCED WORKSHOPS IN SONOMA

By popular demand, Evans Encaustics will host one Sunday a month for five artists who are advanced in their encaustic work. Artists may bring their own work in progress or begin new works and have use of all materials and tools in

the Sonoma loft. Each workshop will include a brief demo of a new technique, plenty of painting time, and an al fresco lunch with great local wine. For information please email me directly: [hyla@comcast.net](mailto:hyla@comcast.net).

NATIONAL ENCAUSTIC CONFERENCE June 6-8, 2008  
[Montserrat College of Art](#), Beverly, Massachusetts



Registration is nearly complete. See [Joanne's Conference Blog](#) for full information.

Sincerely,



[Hylla Evans](#)  
EVANS ENCAUSTICS

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