



for WLD

works from The William Louis-Dreyfus Foundation

steven harvey fine art projects

This catalog was produced
in conjunction with:

for WLD: works from
The William Louis-Dreyfus Foundation

January 18 – February 12, 2017

Curated by Steven Harvey and Fred Bancroft

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*Nature is a mystery, an unbelievable,
perfect mystery.*

— William Louis-Dreyfus

COVER AND INSIDE COVERS:

Alison Hall
Santa Lucia (detail)
2011 graphite and Venetian plaster on panel 12 x 19 inches

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Sangram Majumdar
Portrait of WL-D
2010 oil on canvas 36 x 32 inches
Not in exhibition

I met William in 2004 when I mounted an exhibition of contemporary landscape painting where he discovered Stanley Lewis's work. Over the next dozen years, his interest in Stanley's art developed into a fascination. That was William's way. When he found an artist who interested him profoundly, he stayed with them, looking at their work over time, collecting as many significant examples as he could, and often coming to know the artist personally. This was done completely on his own impetus. While he had a few people he listened to about art they were ultimately incidental to his own taste and vision. He had a kind of singularity of focus that is anomalous in our time, where art is most often purchased based on consensus of critical/market opinions. For William his interest in Stanley Lewis seemed to come out of the same place that his interest in Giacometti had come from 40 years before. At the end of his life he was working on a project involving talking to artists about their process. He wanted to know how they worked, how they made decisions. When he became interested in the paintings and drawings of Sangram Majumdar, at one point he hired a filmmaker to film him painting, as though he might understand Sangram's art more fully by watching him work. William discovered the work of many of the artists in this exhibition, in our gallery. I also discovered artists through him. We both came to Eleanor Ray's work at the same time through her graduate exhibition at The New York Studio School. I first saw Gideon Bok's magisterial large works in William's collection. His eye was diverse, not programmatic, encompassing extreme observational work such as Giacometti, Stanley Lewis, Sangram Majumdar and Catherine Murphy; obsessive self taught artists such as Bill Traylor or James Castle, or an abstract master such as Helen Frankenthaler. To be involved with William was to understand art as a continuum.

— Steven Harvey





Susanna Coffey
Outside, Kahn
2006 oil on panel 6 x 5 7/8 inches

LEFT:

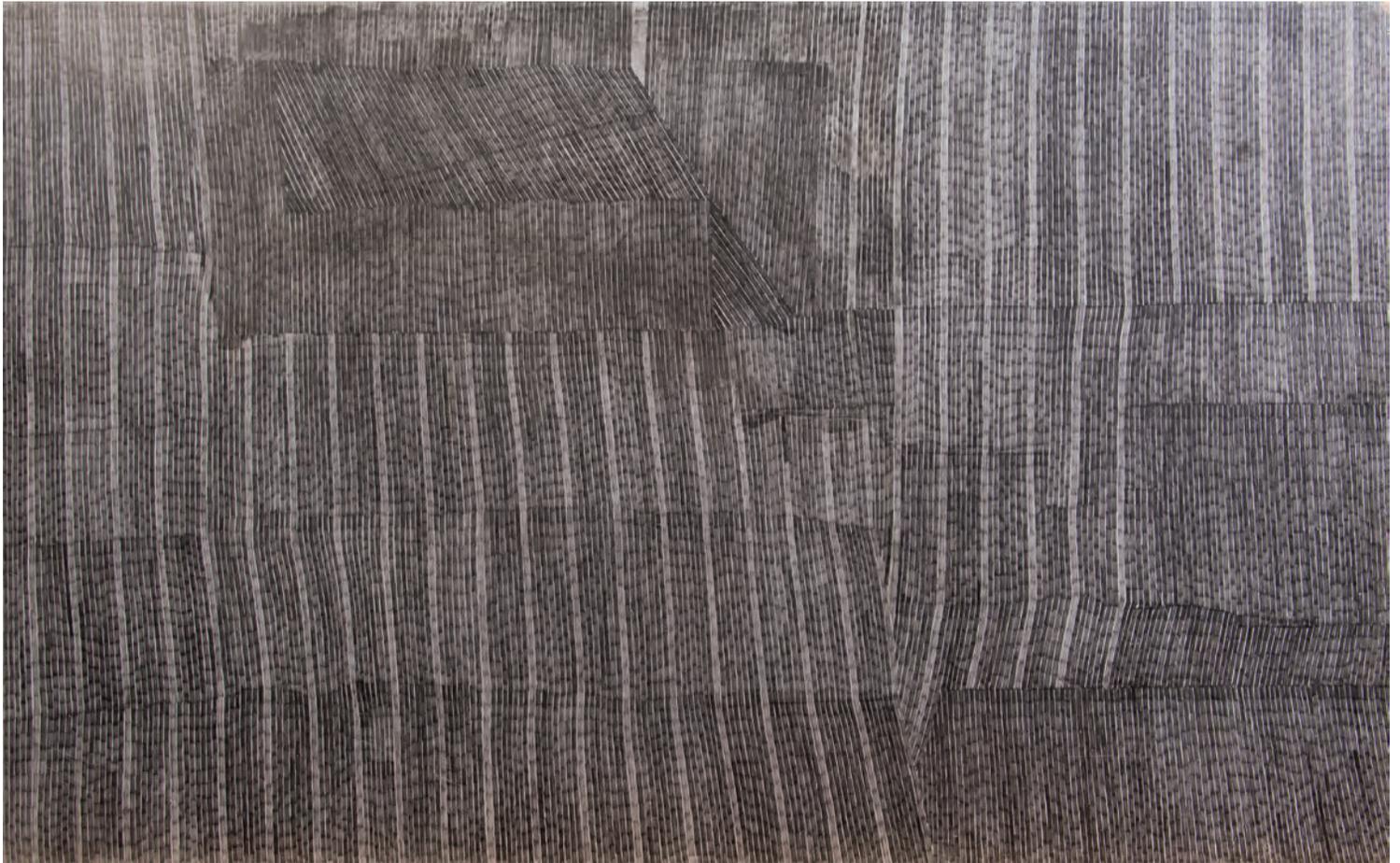
Tara Geer
end
2013 charcoal, pastel, pencil and chalk on paper 15 x 11 inches

When William bought art he did it without a net. The combination of an unparalleled eye, a keen intellect and a healthy ego enabled William to fly solo when buying art without breaking a sweat. He claimed to take advice from numerous people before making a purchase, and there were some to whom he actually listened, but at the end of the day, he did what he wanted and bought what he liked.

When William found an artist whose work he admired, he wanted to buy as much of it as he could. This boundless enthusiasm led him to build significant holdings of individual artists. This was a key characteristic of William's approach from day one. Among the works of art that fascinated William early in his collecting career were the drawings of Alberto Giacometti, the paintings of Leonardo Cremonini, the works on paper of Sam Szafran and the sculptures and drawings of Raymond Mason. Some of these artists are well known today while others remain relatively obscure. To William they were all art stars.

Many of the artists in the present exhibition were collected in depth by William even though he had only discovered their work fairly recently. His appetite for their art was extraordinary, and his love for it was true. William was more eloquent than most collectors when describing the merits of a work of art, and hearing him speak about his artists, one understood his unfailing commitment to their achievements. William often said that aside from children and trees, he loved art more than anything else the world could offer him.

— Fred Bancroft



Alison Hall

Santa Lucia

2011 graphite and Venetian plaster on panel 12 x 19 inches





ABOVE:

Sangram Majumdar

Tabletop #1

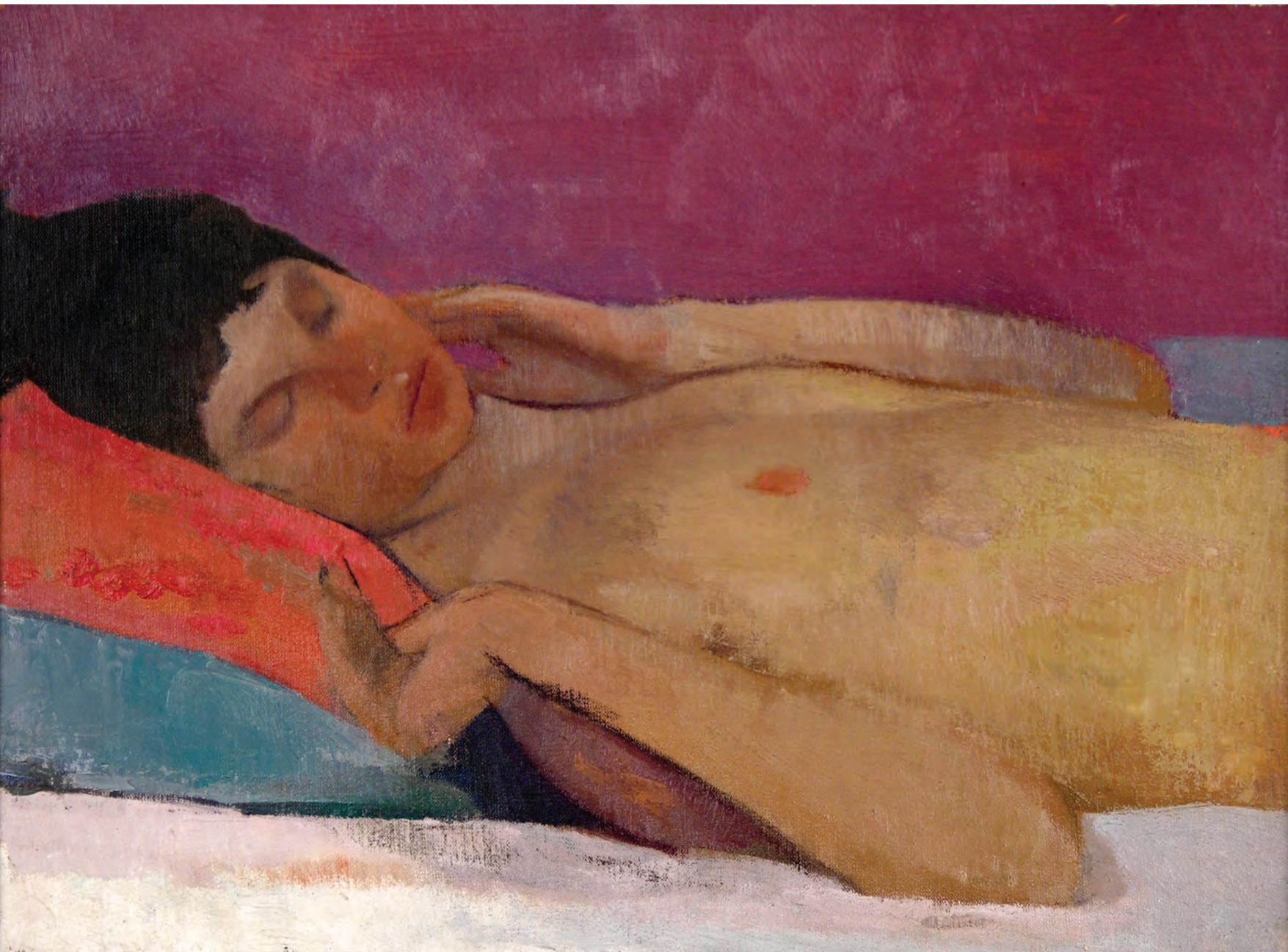
2005 oil on canvas 24 x 40 inches (diptych)

LEFT:

Raymond Mason

Study for Les Halles

1969 watercolor on paper 8 x 10 ¼ inches



Lennart Anderson

Reclining Nude

1967-1968 oil on canvas 11 ¼ x 15 ¾ inches



Beatrice Scaccia

A Pillow

2015 graphite, gesso and wax on paper 11 x 7 1/2 inches



ABOVE:

James Castle

Untitled (Interior with Chest and Door/Interior with Chair)

n.d. found paper, soot, ink 8¼ x 11¾ inches (double-sided)

RIGHT:

Stephanie Pierce

Untitled

2014 oil on canvas 23 x 19 inches



**Letter from Alison Hall to William Louis-Dreyfus,
December 20, 2015:**

William,

The evening that we had dinner in Mt. Kisco with Steven you said something that really struck me as the most truthful statement about art that I've ever heard- "That art must be in praise of something." This week in the Virginia studio I've been working on these new, large (96 x 77 inch), black paintings (11 paintings in total)—the series that I told you about during our dinner. In the afternoons I've taken a break to pick up my best friend's daughter from school. She's six. And on one particular day she came back to my studio with me- that day I had painted one of the large surfaces black, and I still had another layer of paint to put on, so my best friend's daughter helped me. She had the happiest look on her face thinking about painting, she could barely stand still, waiting patiently as I prepared the big brush with oil paint. When I handed her the brush she exclaimed with delight, "I want to write something!" And I said, "Well, go ahead!" SO, with this big old brush, dripping with black paint she began to write in the bottom right corner of the painting. It said this—

I LO
VEY
OU.

I LOVE YOU. That was it. And I thought, just as William said, art must be in praise of something. That all of this (this work I make in my studio), all of this drawing and painting is about that—the expression of love for the people I hold dear. And this sweet child,

before the world has taught her about art or what she should paint or should write, her impulse, her natural instinct, lead her to the thing that we both know. I was amazed. Still in awe. I just wanted to share that with you. And tell you how grateful I am that you shared that beautiful statement with me.

I'm including a photo below, of Aspen painting the letters to her message. The paint is still wet in the photo so you can make out individual letters. As the paint dried the letters were barely legible. But the message is imbedded, forever held in this painting.

Alison





Gideon Bok
Overlap Matt
2000 oil on linen 31 x 33 inches

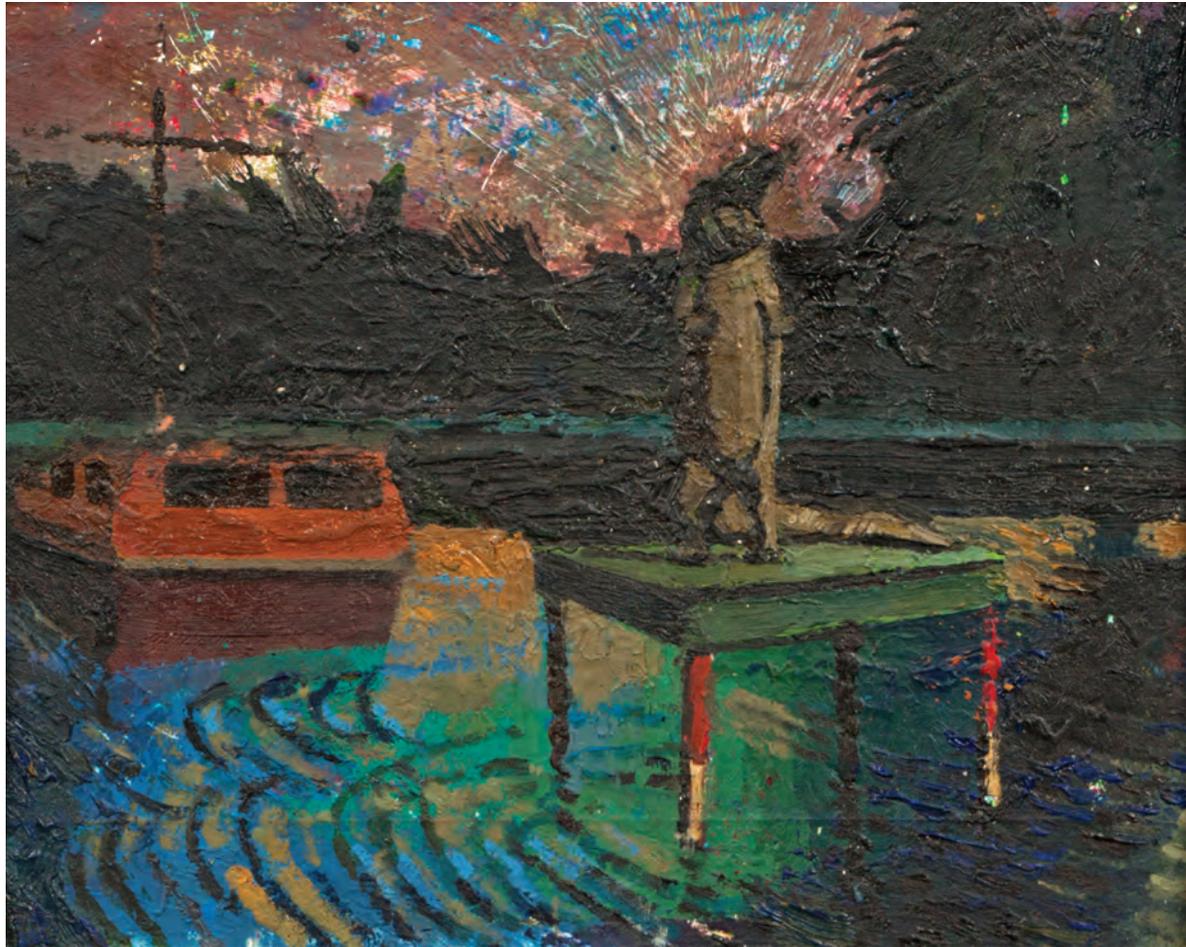


Stanley Lewis

View towards Don Judge's House

2011 ink on paper 24½ x 25 inches





Kurt Knobelsdorf

Homestead

2010 oil on paper mounted on board 8 x 10 inches

LEFT:

Chuck Bowdish

Woman in Black Dress on the Shore, Grey Sky

2009 watercolor on paper 7 ³/₈ x 10 ¹/₄ inches

**E-mail from William Louis-Dreyfus to Beatrice Scaccia,
Summer 2015:**

I am very persuaded by certain points in your e-mail especially the suggestion that the size of the paper directly (and mysteriously) affects what gets drawn and written on it. I can understand that an artist might feel more protected, less out in the wild, calmer on small spaces. I also think the connection with writing is valid and relevant. Writing is something I think about a lot and is a constant presence in my life.

I have an idea for a project: the idea has to do with the role thought has in the making of a visual work of art.

With regard to writing, I have the conviction that it is the thing I know best. Poetry is the topic I give most importance.

The perfect marriage of subject and the expression of it is what makes poems the language of the gods. Same thing for a work of art: it is always the perfect marriage of subject and expression.

Look up on the Internet a Poem called *The Most of It* by Robert Frost. Bathe in its perfection. William

The Most of It

He thought he kept the universe alone;
For all the voice in answer he could wake
Was but the mocking echo of his own
From some tree-hidden cliff across the lake.
Some morning from the boulder-broken beach
He would cry out on life, that what it wants
Is not its own love back in copy speech,
But counter-love, original response.
And nothing ever came of what he cried
Unless it was the embodiment that crashed
In the cliff's talus on the other side,
And then in the far distant water splashed,
But after a time allowed for it to swim,
Instead of proving human when it neared
And someone else additional to him,
As a great buck it powerfully appeared,
Pushing the crumpled water up ahead,
And landed pouring like a waterfall,
And stumbled through the rocks with horny tread,
And forced the underbrush — and that was all.

— Robert Frost



Catherine Murphy

Early Influence

2012 graphite on paper 24 ³/₈ x 28 ⁷/₈ inches



Eleanor Ray
Museum Window
2012 oil on panel 4 x 5 inches



Graham Nickson
Grey and Yellow-Orange Sunset Rome
1973 oil on canvas 11½ x 13¾ inches

In my interactions with William, I was always impressed by the intensity of his enthusiasms, which he so clearly enjoyed sharing. On my first visit to his collection, he asked, in what seemed like a comic understatement, “See anything you like?” Like other visitors, I was initially amazed simply by the collection’s depth, with whole rooms and sometimes more than one devoted to individual artists. But even more memorable was the experience of looking at a large family of works through the lens of one person’s voracious enthusiasm. His obvious difficulty in choosing just a few examples of anything resonates with artists in particular, who often relate to art history through loves and manias of their own. William’s approach brought disparate artists together in a way that was emotional, rather than academic or logical. To see artists I knew personally, like my former teachers Stanley Lewis and Graham Nickson, juxtaposed with those from a completely different context, like James Castle, made immediate intuitive sense and deepened my view of each artist’s work. William’s passion for all these individual makers communicated a strong belief in art as a shared, even collaborative, human project.

— Eleanor Ray



E.M. Saniga

Two Does

1986 oil on panel 17 x 22½ inches



Stuart Shils
Untitled
2009 oil on linen 13 ¼ x 11 ½ inches



Stanley Lewis

William and His Beech Tree

2013 oil on canvas on board 25 ¾ x 29 ½ inches

Not in exhibition

Special thanks to The William Louis-Dreyfus Foundation for their invaluable assistance in the production of this exhibition and catalog. All works and photography courtesy of The William Louis-Dreyfus Foundation.

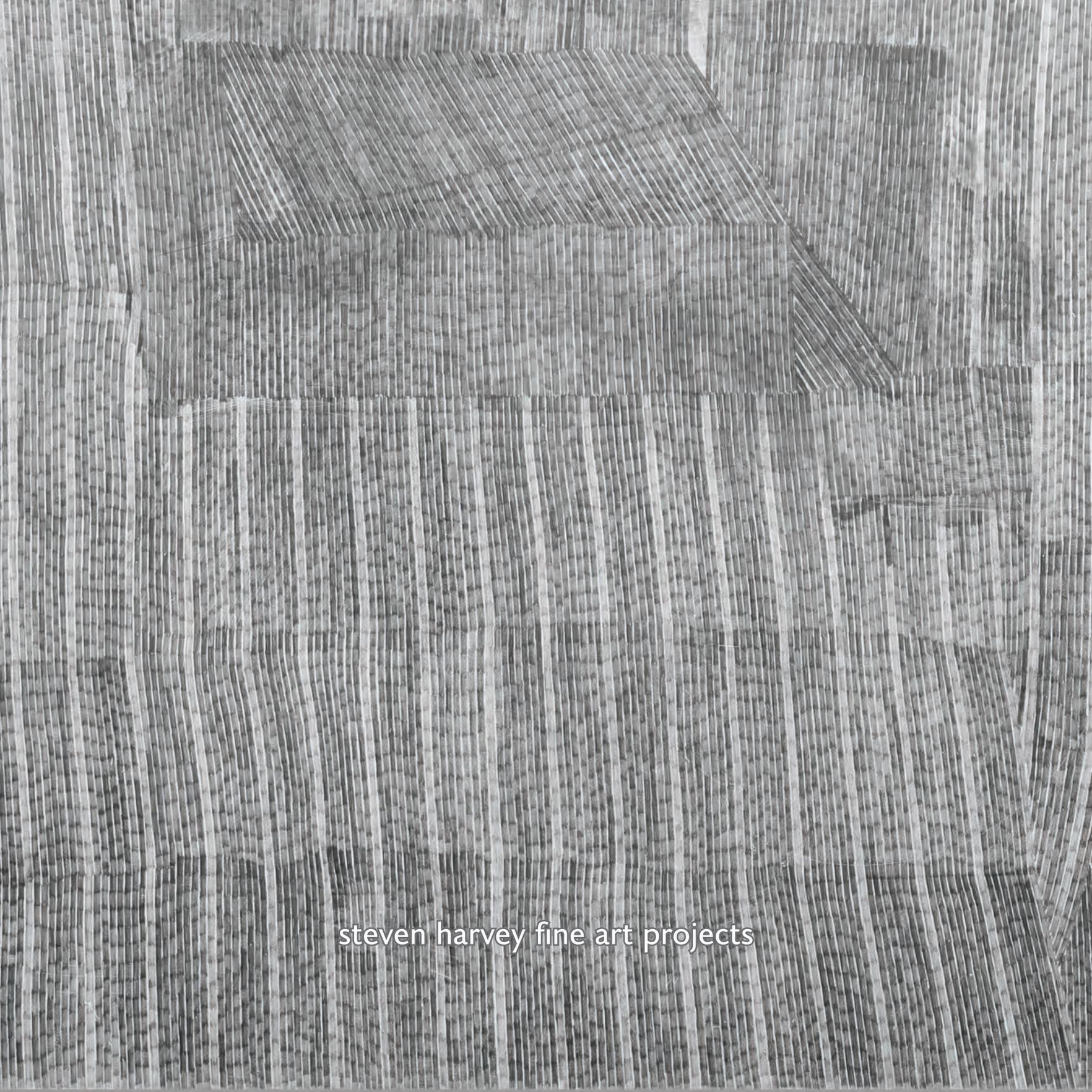
Catalog design: John Goodrich

"It is not that the meaning cannot be explained. But there are certain meanings that are lost forever the moment they are explained in words."

— Murakami

The Murakami statement may mostly apply to painting. Thought takes words. Feeling overcomes words. Meaning is what we try to use to conquer love, loneliness and bewilderment. It's all a great puzzle and whatever it is we do, we are in a lovers quarrel with it. I hope you are well and safe and happy.

— William Louis-Dreyfus to Beatrice Scaccia



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