

Evan Hecox
Dark Island

Joshua Liner Gallery

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May 24 - June 23, 2012

Opening Reception:

Thursday May 24, 6-9 pm

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Joshua Liner Gallery is pleased to present *Dark Island*, an exhibition of new mixed-media works by the Denver-based artist Evan Hecox. This presentation will mark his second solo show with the gallery.

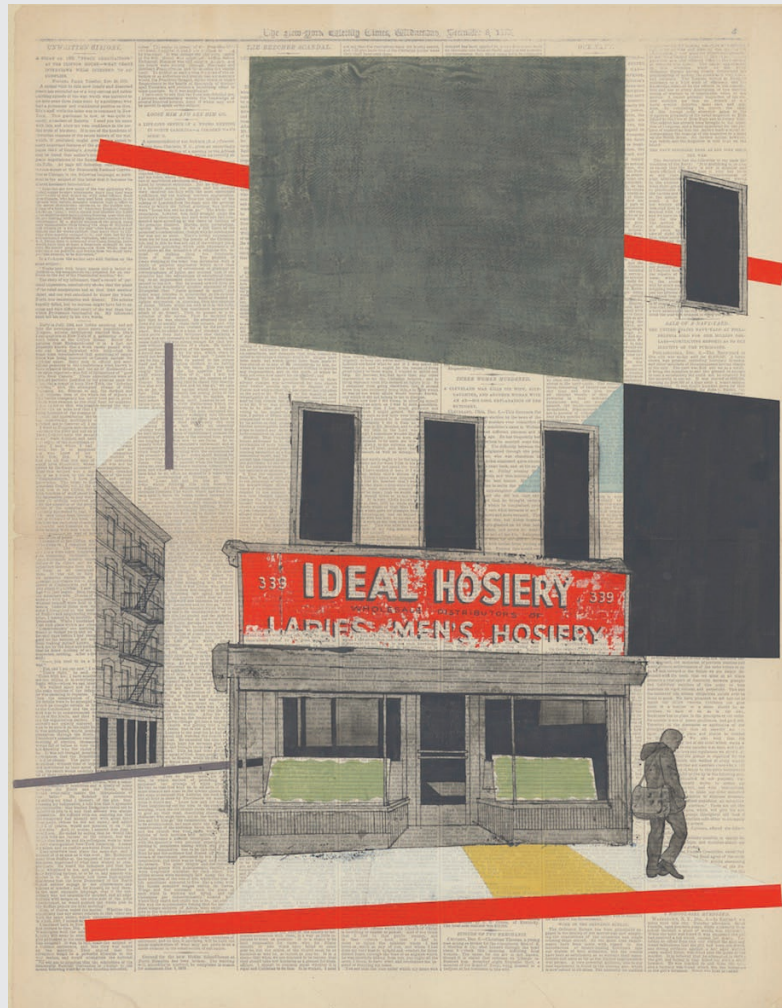
Evan Hecox has a roving traveler's eye—it is the gateway to his art. His passion for exploring unfamiliar cities has taken him to London, Mexico City, and Hanoi. With vintage Polaroid camera in hand, he scours the urban landscape, looking, lingering, absorbing, and editing. The images he captures are not documentary records, per se, but rather impressions of cities left behind in his memory. They set the stage for a stimulating dialogue with personal experience that crosses between different artmaking media and disciplines.

Dark Island—a suite of acrylic and gouache works on vintage newspaper—is inspired by Hecox's recent hikes across lower Manhattan and west Brooklyn in New York City. As in earlier series inspired by specific locales, the artist focuses here on telling urban fragments: a building façade, rooftop, isolated alleyway, waterfront, or elevated train trellis. Working precisely from photographs, he uses a highly refined process to subtract certain elements, laying down a skeletal vestige of a remembered setting that is then reimagined (or “amplified”) with painterly techniques. Though photography is an early stage in his artmaking practice and employed only as a reference, Hecox relishes the use of his near-obsolete cameras and film, noting, “I like to have a high level of materials and artistry run through the whole process.”

In *The Stranger's Grave*, the lumbering side view of a tenement—rendered in a flat wash of gray gouache, drawn in ink—is punctuated with the fine lines of fire escapes, small windows, crisscross security grate, bicycles, a street tree, and the stray human silhouette. Rising up through the image are faint columns of printed type, the remnants of city life deposited over a century ago in the *New York Weekly Times*. Hecox has appropriated and specially treated this newspaper as a surface for the painting. Here, this palimpsest of recorded history is an evocative backdrop for a passage of contemporary graffiti writing recreated on the building's façade.

In works like *Ideal Hosiery*, Hecox riffs on the columnar attributes of the newspaper layout that mimic the blocky shapes in the windows and storefronts of his layered cityscape. Elsewhere, monochromatic parallelograms and bands of pure color—red, black, orange, green—course across the street scene like quotations from Malevich-style constructivism. These bold, abstract elements replace features from the source photographs in their placement, scale, and perspective, but they also appear to shift between fore- and background or exist in their own imaginative dimension.

In *Five Boroughs*, Hecox dispenses with representation altogether, depicting instead the names of the city's boroughs in an eye-popping, early-Modernist font. These graphic block forms, in an assortment of grays and other muted hues, conjure up Manhattan's “Dark Island” of architectural greatness, intensity, and romantic memory. Across all of these works, Hecox distills his fascination with urban complexity, layering photojournalistic details, urban detritus, and art history into *pentimenti* from his own inner landscape. As the artist notes, “I like to use abstract elements, words, and small symbols as ways of breaking apart the original image and putting it back together as something new. My work ultimately looks out into the world to make an observation while at the same time pushing back into my own mind and demonstrating how a particular environment affects my senses.”



Ideal Hosiery, 2012
Acrylic, gouache, ink, on treated
vintage newspaper
25 x 20 in.



Strangers Grave, 2012
Acrylic, gouache, ink on treated
vintage newspaper
25 x 20 in.