

# CANTWELL

*Hidden Life of Stripes*

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Stripes have been my major focus for some time, and they continue to surprise me with just how much can be elicited from this simple form. Rather than static and limiting, they can almost feel as if they are alive and have their own unique persona. The challenge for me is how to perpetuate the variety of color and the variability of stroke without locking vertical stripes into an inert pattern. The stripes should undulate and commingle with each other but hold their individual power fearlessly. My time in the studio has taught me that you have to pay attention to take in what the stripes are offering. Exhibited as a grouping, the paintings in my series “The Hidden Life of Stripes” surround the viewer and demand attention. They wait to be observed. In their numbers, they are a community of stripedness, standing together to make their voices count and possibly overtaking the viewer with their strength. The series title borrows from the book *The Hidden Life of Trees* written by a German forest ranger, who proposes that trees are sentient beings that cooperate with each other. Walking into the exhibit room loaded with stripes should give a sense of a different universe — a jumping-off point to experience them as something more than a motif. Each individual stripe is like one chromosome to an overall organism, whose very uniqueness is required for the whole to be formed and sustained. Unconsciously I give my stripes a quality by combining luminosity, opacity, translucence, and hue that they are breathing. My humanness somehow gets transferred into the painting. In my search for the perfect soulful stripe, I am reminded of my own hidden inner life.

Kathy Cantwell, 2017



Hidden Life of Stripes 1, Encaustic, 24" x 24" (2017)



Hidden Life of Stripes 2, Encaustic, 24" x 24" (2017)



Hidden Life of Stripes 3, Encaustic, 24" x 24" (2017)



Hidden Life of Stripes 8, Encaustic, 24" x 24" (2017)



Hidden Life of Stripes 10, Encaustic, 24" x 24" (2017)





Hidden Life of Stripes 9, Encaustic, 24" x 36" (2017)



Hidden Life of Stripes 17, Encaustic, 24" x 36" (2017)



Hidden Life of Stripes 15, Encaustic, 24" x 36" (2017)



Hidden Life of Stripes 12, Encaustic, 24" x 36" (2017)



Hidden Life of Stripes 7  
Encaustic  
24" x 18"  
(2017)



Hidden Life of Stripes 13  
Encaustic  
24" x 18"  
(2017)



Hidden Life of Stripes 11  
Encaustic  
24" x 18"  
(2017)



Hidden Life of Stripes 20  
Encaustic  
24" x 18"  
(2017)





Hidden Life of Stripes 4  
Encaustic  
24" x 18"  
(2017)

Hidden Life of Stripes 5  
Encaustic  
24" x 18"  
(2017)





Hidden Life of Stripes 6, Encaustic, 24" x 24" (2017)



Hidden Life of Stripes 16, Encaustic, 24" x 24" (2017)



Hidden Life of Stripes 18, Encaustic, 24" x 24" (2017)

For her senior thesis show, Kathy Cantwell exhibited her paintings of horizontal stripes in a field of one color. It would be decades before she returned to abstraction. Although the extension of a straight line had a powerful pull, her personal and artistic life took a more circuitous route. Yet throughout the years, the one constant has been her passion for making art.

Born in Trenton, NJ, Cantwell was an outsider tomboy, who lived in a dicey neighborhood with her traditional Catholic family in a house surrounded by barbed-wire and tall wood fencing. From the age of thirteen, she spent hours in her makeshift bedroom-studio. Weekends while attending an all-girl high school, she escaped to nearby Philadelphia to take classes at the Moore School of Art, learning studio skills advanced for someone her age. After earning a BFA at C.W. Post College on Long Island, Cantwell moved to New York City like many artist hopefuls and found work in the music industry.

During the day it was an Alice-in-Wonderland world of rock stars and rappers in which she might be paying the bills for wrecked hotel rooms and keeping gun-bearing artists and producers within budget, but at night Cantwell came home to paint dark, uninhabited cityscapes and quirky portraits. After 25 years of this balancing act, she left NYC with her wife, Ann Sweeney, to raise their two adopted children there in rural New Jersey. In 2010, the Cantwell-Sweeney's moved to Maplewood, NJ, just 30 minutes from Manhattan. These locations in central and northern New Jersey allowed her to become attuned to a new sense of openness light, and now the proximity to other artists and creative communities spurred her to explore new means of self-expression.

In meeting artist Lisa Pressman, she found a mentor who encouraged her return to abstraction. A sort of recovering eccentric, Cantwell is currently in a process of looking for her "inner stripe." Her latest work in encaustic has become well-known through a number of recent solo and group exhibitions, primarily in the New York-New Jersey area as well as Provincetown, Massachusetts. In 2016, she was invited to become a member of The Painting Center in Chelsea and to be represented by Adam Peck Gallery on Cape Cod.



Hidden Life of Stripes 19, Encaustic, 24" x 24" (2017)

