

In my current work, I find myself drawn to the use of metallic, iridescent, and fluorescent colors in combination with textures that lift the paint from the canvas, creating what I call deep patterns, almost Jungian in a way because they seem to tap into something deep within us as people. I strive for my optical and geometric work not to be “just wallpaper” as so much in these genres has often become. Rather, particularly in my agitprop and my Four Elements series, I seek to force a reckoning with the artwork as a presence unto itself, and the use of these more exotic acrylic mediums really produces a moment of active tension both in person and via digital reproduction. I am continuing to explore where the idea of line itself creates or demarcates what the eye experiences as that is the essence of my work: fooling the eye into seeing things it never imagined could exist, and then going beyond fooling into willing participation in a different way to see the world around us, externally and internally.

As such, these are primal works focusing on vision, order, and patterning, the palette-knifed metallics creating a deliberate shimmering effect, necessitating multiple viewpoints to appreciate fully and requiring an active participation, which is why my most abstract of forms come alive on the canvas, imbued with an incomparable, uniquely living energy. I am thus attempting to re-orient what "wine country" art can and should be. Rather than tourist-driven imagery, I bring more formal approaches to the surroundings and equally allow them to inspire me in ways both direct and indirect. Optical Art is participatory--the viewer must contribute, and does so individually and idiosyncratically--in order for the pieces to function. That looseness constrained by interaction is the possibility-filled space I am exploring and seek to showcase.

Josh Stein (b. 1973, Hammonton, New Jersey) is a lifelong multi-mode creative artist, musician, writer, professor with multiple advanced degrees from the University of California and the University of Liverpool, and adult beverage maker, residing in Napa, California. With formal training in calligraphy, graphic design, and color work; more than two decades as a researcher, teacher, and writer in cultural analysis in the vein of the Birmingham and Frankfurt Schools; and a decade and a half as a commercial artist and designer for multiple winery clients; he brings his influences of Pop art, Tattoo flash and lining techniques, and Abstract Surrealism and Expressionism to the extreme edge where graphic design and calligraphy meet the Platonic theory of forms. The resulting metallic inks and acrylics on canvas delight and perplex, moving between the worlds of solidity and abstraction.

Thank you for your time,  
Josh