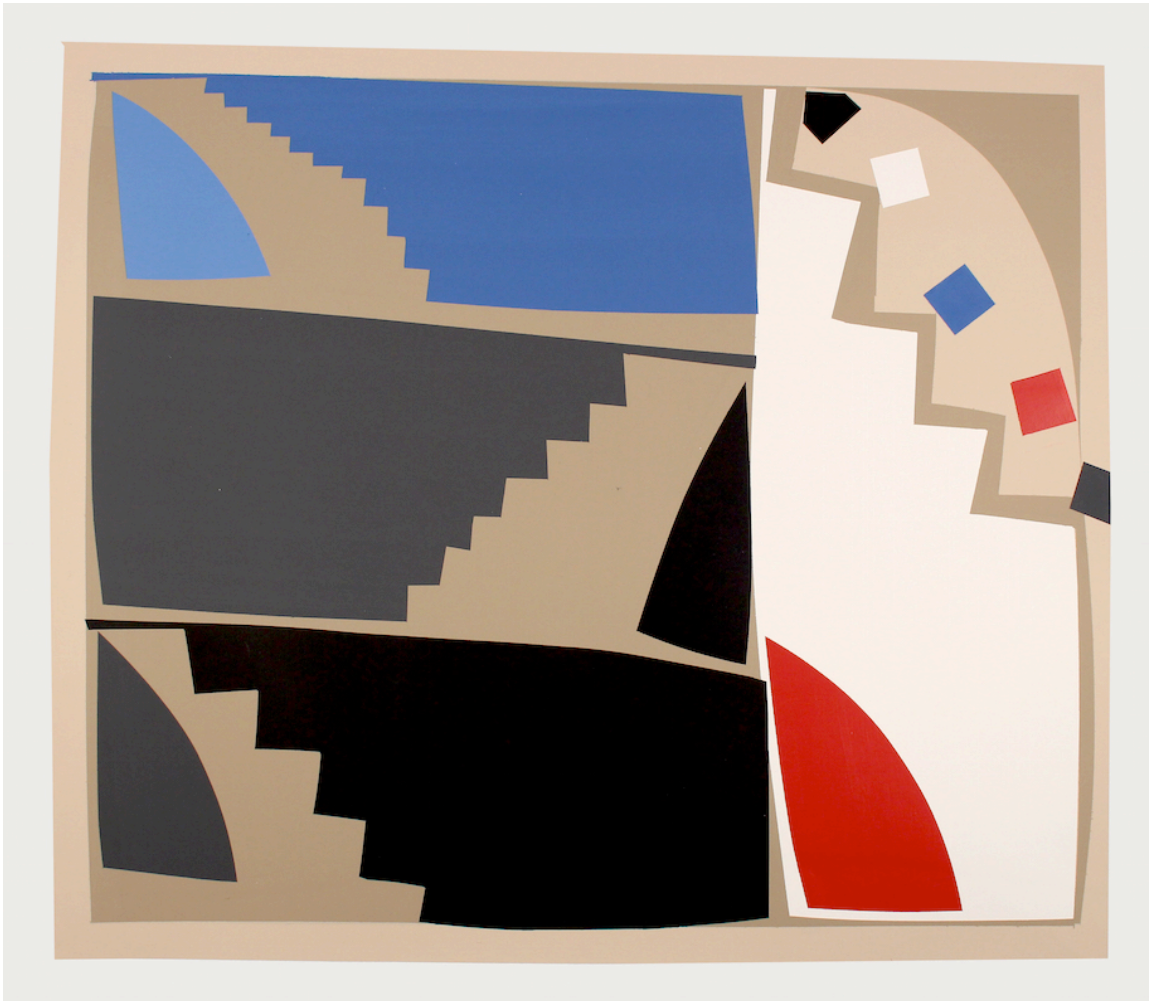


Art Review: The Millbrook Independent



One of Joel Foster's paintings at the RE Institute

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Re Institute shows Joel Foster

by [Carola Lott](#)

April 25--The first show of the Re Institute's 2015 season opened with an exhibition of "Reverse Engineer," an installation of "Stairs Revisited," a series of paintings on paper by Joel Foster.

Joel Foster's 17 paintings on paper in the Re Institute's downstairs gallery differ from his prior work. The swirls and arabesques that characterized his earlier paintings have been replaced by jagged forms resembling a series of steps.

In 2007 Foster lost most of his sight to Stargardt's Disease. For a time he had just enough peripheral vision to continue painting, but as his sight deteriorated, he set about finding a means to render the images he had in his mind. To create a design, he devised an ingenious way of laying down two pieces of thin tape adjacent to one another on a piece of paper as a form of stencil. Through feel he was able to paint within the spaces between the tapes.

Foster has always been rather matter of fact about the loss of much of his vision. "Losing all but peripheral vision has limited what I can do. The repetition of simple images and colors, which are self-imposed limitations, can be very liberating." According to Klimowicz, Joel simply says, "this is what I have. What can I do with this instead of focusing on what I can't do."

The side view of stairs in many of Foster's new work, "was an early memory that I drew as a child. The stairs may be a metaphor for the challenges of navigating through the world."

In each of these painting stairs lead upward in different configurations. In some they are seen in silhouette. In one, a series of red, blue, black and white squares tumble down the steps. In another yellow, black and gray painting, the stairs are seen from a number of different view points that create not only steps, but triangles and a series of zig zags.

Foster works diligently for most of every day. He is eminently self-sufficient and makes his compositions without any assistance. In fact he is so self-sufficient he often rides his bicycle on the rail trail. That is courage.

The exhibition can be seen at the Re Institute - April 25 – May 30. 1395 Boston Corners Rd, Millerton, NY 12546 (518) 567-5359 www.thereinstitute.com