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## Defining Moments / A Life Portrait

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## **Timothy Haerens**

### **Extended Artist Statement**

Is being an artist hereditary? Did genetics determine my destiny to become a creator of art or was I influenced by my observation of others – or both? These are questions that I have pondered; and it has been my experience that one inquires and contemplates more frequently with age.

My paternal grandfather was a successful musician, a pianist who formed and led his own orchestra. When he stopped playing professionally, he utilized his musical talents by volunteering his time to play the organ for the choir as well as other events at his church. In addition, he was regularly hired by the Mormon Church to play for their world famous Tabernacle Choir. He often joked about how the Mormons paid him for his service but the Catholics got it for free.

My uncle was a successful actor. He was determined to study acting and, after graduating from high school, headed to Goodman Theatre in Chicago in order to make that happen. He was fortunate to have a flourishing career in the entertainment industry with starring roles in theatrical productions, movies and television. He was able to live his dream, which was inspiring to me. I once heard psychotherapist, author and lecturer, Clayton Barbeau say that if you spend your days doing what fulfills your passion, you really never have to work a day in your life. As I prepare for my second career, I choose this as my mantra. I spent most of my life working to support and feed my family and at this stage in my life I want to spend my days feeding my soul.

Although it has been many years since I first discovered the wonders of making art, I think that my passion stems from the experience of getting love and attention as a child. When I was a boy, I wasn't interested in or good at sports and art was something in which I could invest my time and energy and I could excel. In addition to the complements I received from my parents and extended family, I gained positive attention from my teachers at school. It was also solace from the bullying and teasing that I endured from not being coordinated and athletic. My parents supported my talent by sending me to art school at an early age, where I worked with charcoal and pastels on paper. As a teenager I attended painting classes, where I was exposed to oil painting. I felt safe and secure — I belonged and was accepted there. During my senior year in high school, I felt honored and pleased to have been given the opportunity to design the cover of our yearbook. I judged that it was an opportunity to gain acknowledgement and respect from my fellow students.

My first encounter with a successful artist happened when I was very young. His name is Dietrich Grunewald and he was the father of one of my older sister's friends. He was an impressionist whose work included oil paintings, murals, serigraphs, textile design and more. Much like my uncle, Dietrich made his living by working at a craft that brought him personal satisfaction, prominence and financial freedom. I surmise that my early childhood impressions of these successful visual and performing artists serve as my inspiration and motivation to create art.

Since then, there have been many celebrated artists whose work has inspired me. My list includes Betty Gold and Edward Kienholz. Gold utilizes many different genres of art making and I relate to her desire to express herself in different media. Like Gold, I

tend to use geometric shapes and/or a vibrant color palette in my work. The art of Kienholz stirs strong emotions in the viewer. His commentaries about the ugliness in the world are compelling and indelible. I'm mesmerized by his ability to put flesh and blood on his concepts and to involve the viewer as a participant in his art. I too want the viewer to engage with my art, such as finding any underlying irony, humor or psychological implications with which they can relate.

Many of my teachers' and professors' work and work ethic have also inspired me as well as interactions with my fellow students – all have significantly affected my artistic growth. I am especially grateful to art professors who have had a considerable impact on me. There's Quinton Bemiller from whom I've learned many painting skills and techniques and Misty Burruel who influenced my interest in three-dimensional work and nurtured my growth and development as a sculptor. Additionally, the time I spend reading and talking about art with my instructors and classmates has been as valuable as the time I spend fabricating my work.

My personal philosophy and overall vision is to make a difference in the world – to help people to see themselves as honored and valuable and to be a positive influence in the lives of others. As a result, I've spent a good portion of my life working in various church ministries and facilitating self-help workshops and seminars for a variety of organizations. I am currently teaching art to inmates at one of the prisons in the local area. I realize that being an artist is a vehicle I can use in order to expand upon my goals and aspirations to leave an integral mark in the world. I think that is why I intend to teach art at the college level. I have excellent interpersonal skills and I believe that teaching will offer a solid platform from which to expand my vision of being encouraging,



motivating and inspiring to those I encounter. Because I've been involved and invested in helping people to identify and attain their personal growth goals, I've witnessed and celebrated the transformation that has happened for many of these individuals. This has been a rewarding experience both for me and for the people with whom I've worked.

I have the intense desire to experiment with my art and attempt to see the world anew. In other words, I create art in order to study it intently, to spend time with it, and to know it intimately. I believe that my process is as important as the result I aim to achieve, perhaps even more so. Childhood memories of Mr. & Mrs. Samsel's art school, touching the pastel chalks and charcoal and blending colors with my fingers, palms and the side of my hands remain with me and these memories excite me to this day. They remind me of the productivity and accomplishment I experience when working, feeling, manipulating, cutting, chiseling, building, and/or painting and they demonstrate a kind of seduction I have with whatever materials I may be using. From concept to canvas or from scheme to sculpture, I continue to be fascinated as I watch and feel my hands create something that is uniquely me. Most often there is a relevance identified in my work that is personal and sometimes humorous or whimsical.

Being the youngest child in my family, I had the opportunity to observe my sister's interaction with our parents and to adapt my behavior based upon my perceptions of what worked or didn't work for her. Because I had an overwhelming desire to please my folks in order to secure their love and acceptance, I was compelled to be good. Being an intent observer was a catalyst for accomplishing what I wanted and needed. I see this compulsive behavior as a step in my developing an analytic approach to my surroundings. Gathering from both personal experience and common knowledge, I

venture into my art from a clinical perspective. I break down concepts, think on my toes, and use creative moments as opportunities to comprehend things more fully. When incorporating something close to my heart in my work, I tend to observe rather than react: to step out of the piece and into the essence of what I'm trying to learn and then convey. I attempt to understand the entirety of a situation. I often incorporate hard-edge and geometric shapes in my work using painter's tape to create clean lines and sharp surfaces. My father was a painting contractor and I would often hear him say that the most important part of doing a good job of painting is the amount of time that you spend on the prep work. I know that I assimilated his message and have incorporated this element in my art making process. Perhaps he is also responsible for my passion for using ungodly amounts of painter's tape in fabricating my work.

My art is frequently an expression of my life experience, such as the work I did while my father was going through the process of dying or when my daughter was dealing with breast cancer. I also view my art as creation, a forum for concretizing a concept I've developed through my observations about life or puzzles generated through a vigilant thought process.

I paint both abstract and what I call semi-realistic paintings that oftentimes reflect my passion for a vibrant color palette. I periodically use textural elements in my abstract paintings in order to create a three dimensional effect. Graphic design has informed the pop art elements in my work. I recently painted a series with an umbrella related theme and realized that I'm attracted to the skeleton or the structural elements of the umbrella as well as the skin or protective component. Having been raised in an environment of a legacy of rules about how to live in this world coupled with twelve years of Catholic

education, I came to value structure and security. Home was a safe place that was filled with love, a spot where I was protected from the bullying of my peers at school. One of the ways I coped with life was with humor. Therefore it's not surprising that some of my work has comical aspects or elements of satire, which gives the viewer food for thought or the opportunity to laugh, smile or relate.

As a graduate student, I've had the good fortune to be visited by several established artists, critics, and writers in my studio. One visitor who profoundly affected me was Michael O'Malley who asked me to contemplate on why I do what I do. My self-reflection revealed my early-acquired quest for structure and security and a compulsion with being neat and orderly. Mom kept a clean and uncluttered household and I stayed in her good graces by following her directions. Yet in order to cooperate with and at the same time not be totally confined by these innate tendencies, I often combine organic shapes with the architectural lines in my paintings. Perhaps it is a latent form of rebellion. The lines are strategically placed and controlled while the shapes are sometimes allowed to float freely as they travel in search of a space to rest. Another technique I use is microwaving or drying paint and collaging it to a canvas or other substrate. This adds both texture and an organic element to my paintings.

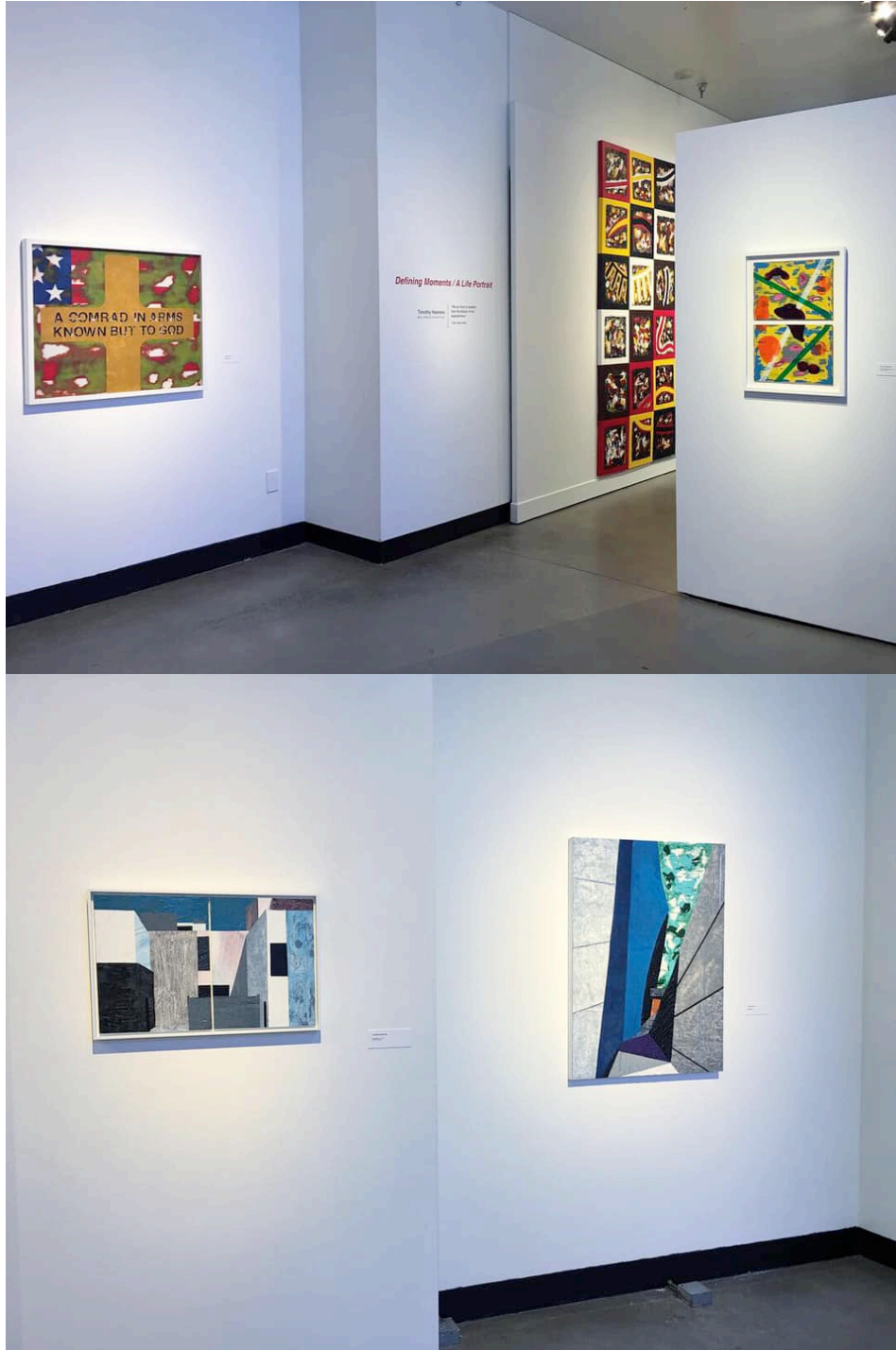
Through my art I am expressing my point of view about my life and surroundings. It's a physical manifestation of how I am processing what I am seeing, experiencing and feeling. I am fulfilled and satisfied whenever I create something from the core of my being – my mind, heart, hands and soul. In a very real way, I see myself as making a physical mark on the world that could possibly be here long after I'm gone. I also see my art as having a purpose – that sense of answering the question “Why am I here?” In

recent years I have spent considerable time reflecting on this question not only as it applies to me, but also how I see it applying to everyone in this world. I've come to the conclusion that we are here to learn and to teach, to help others in their journey to liberation – freedom from limitations and constraints.

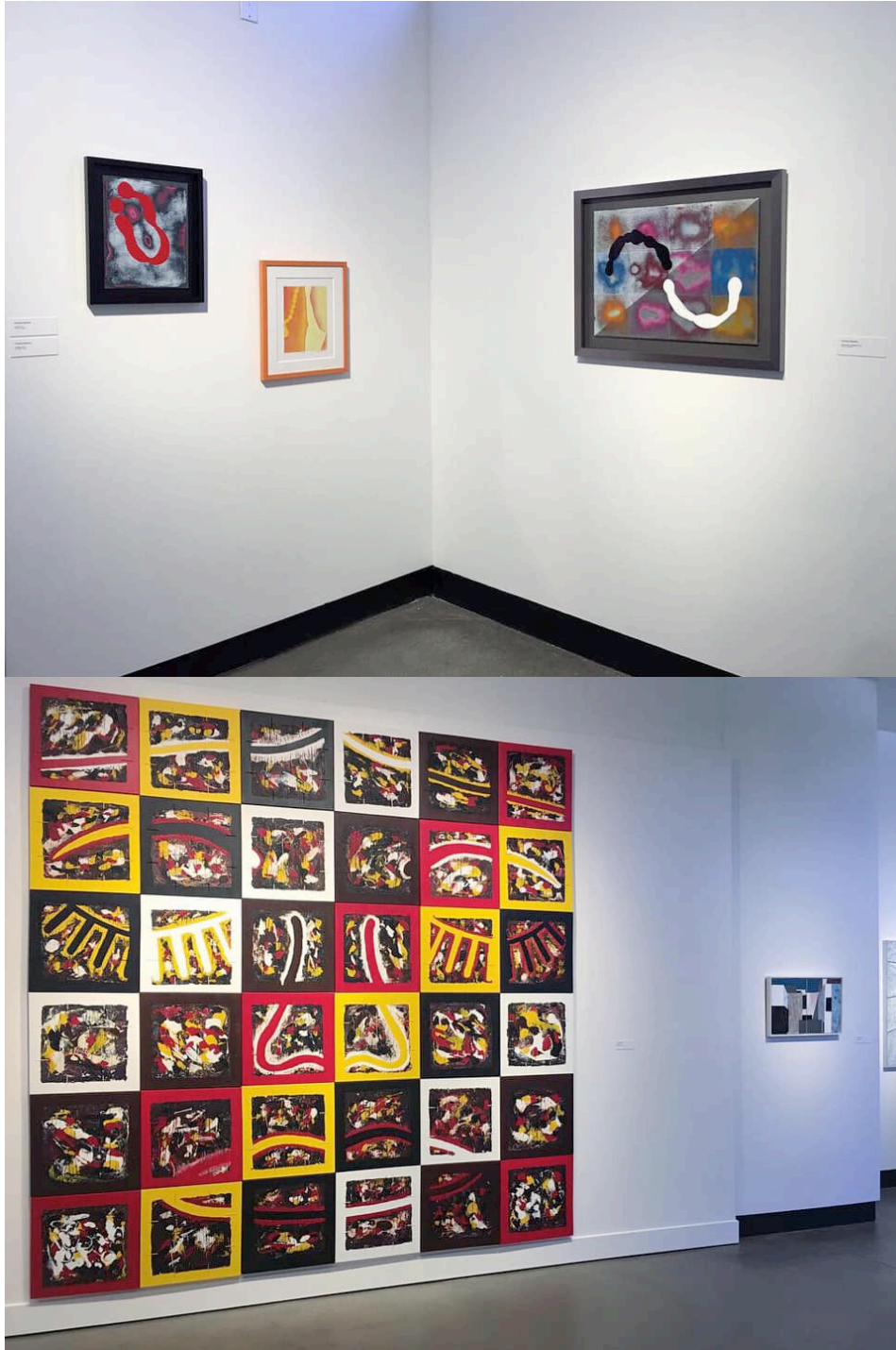
I understand that as artists we have the opportunity to create art that makes a powerful statement about the many injustices in our world and the value system that appears to be supported. I have done work that focuses on police brutality and art that pertains to materialism and consumerism. For example, in my painting *Do You Have the Time?* I address how our intense connection to technology is a hindrance to intimate verbal communication.

I'm an artist today because it's the most effective way I have to best express my creative nature and drive. Being an artist provides me with the opportunity to produce something real and concrete from something that I've conceived in my mind. I have a penchant for being a visual artist because it provides me with the opportunity to translate my thoughts, ideas, feelings and/or emotions into a tangible entity.

At this time I am embracing an experimental stage with my art and continue working with the dried paint technique to see where it leads me. I incorporated this method in a recent painting entitled *Journey to Wholeness*. It is a self-portrait that reflects my personal growth odyssey. I've come to the realization that the more I embrace the gray areas of life, the more complete I am becoming. As I work at being more self-reflective through meditation and intimate discussions with my wife and others whom I trust, I feel confident that this element of my journey is a vital contribution to the evolution of my art and my life.



Timothy Haerens, *Defining Moments / A Life Portrait*, The Dutton Family Gallery, Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art, California State University San Bernardino, February 28 – March 14, 2019



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Timothy Haerens, *Vulnerable*, 2019. Acrylic on canvas, 40" x 30".



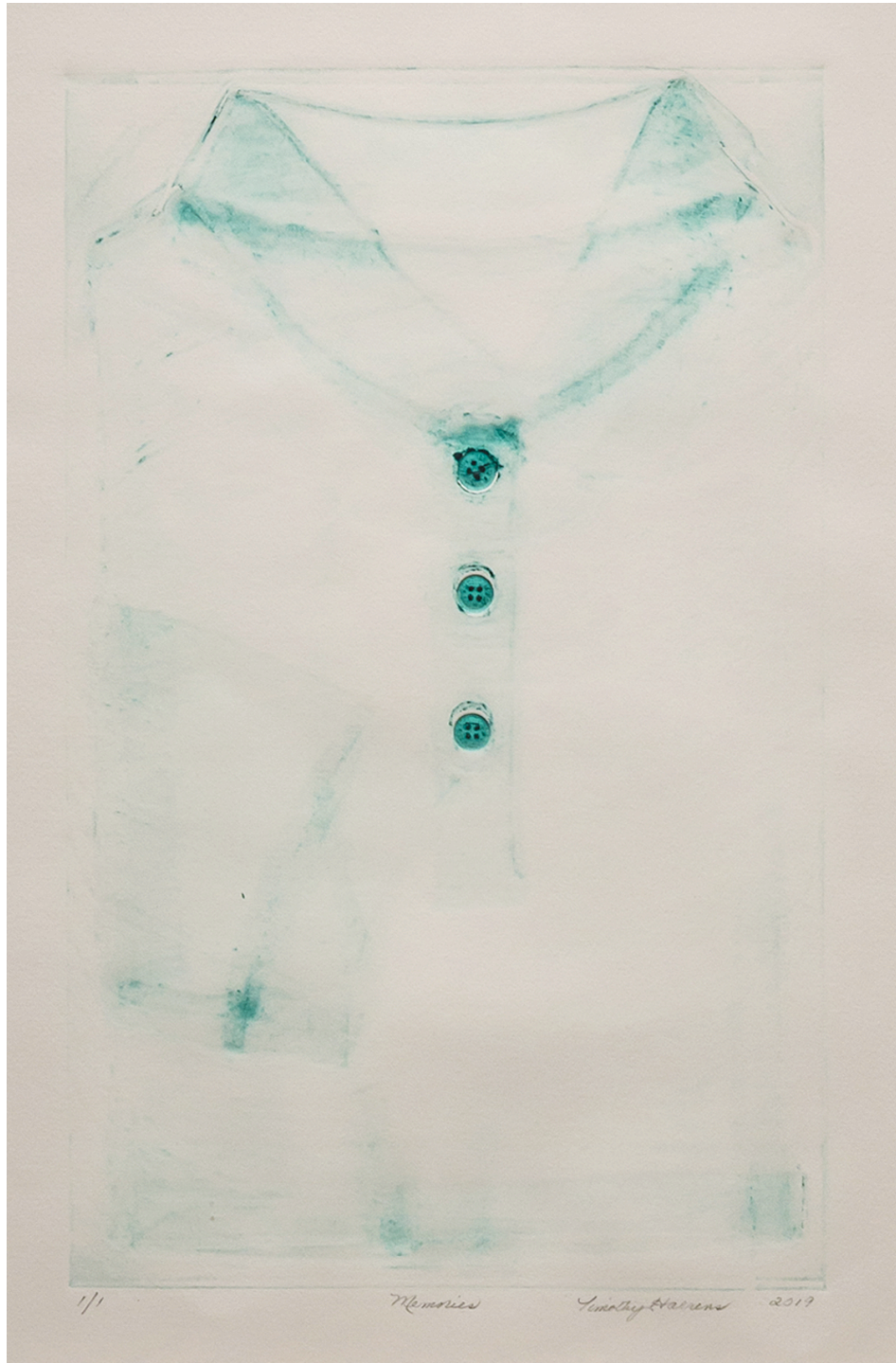


Timothy Haerens, *Atone*, 2019. Acrylic and upholstery thread on 36 – 18" x 18" canvases, 108" x 108" overall dimensions.





Timothy Haerens, *Norman D.*, 2019. Acrylic on plexiglass mounted over a photograph, 30" x 36".



Timothy Haerens, *Memories*, 2019. Collagraph on paper, 16" x 10".





Timothy Haerens, *Divided*, 2018. Monoprint on paper, 10" x 8".





Timothy Haerens, *Enlightened*, 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 30" x 40".



Timothy Haerens, *Introspection*, 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 30" x 40".

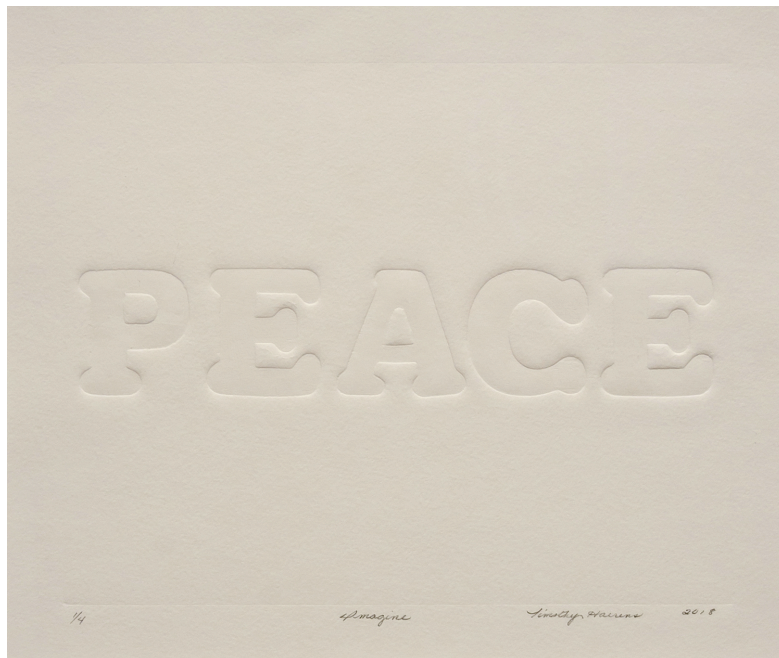




Timothy Haerens, *Gray, Black, and Blue Days*, 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 30" x 40".



Timothy Haerens, *Comedy and Tragedy*, 2018. Acrylic on plexiglass, 18" x 24".



Timothy Haerens, *Imagine*, 2018. Collagraph on paper, 8" x 10".





Timothy Haerens, *Under the Microscope*, 2018. Acrylic on plexiglass on 2 – 11" x 14" panels, 23" x 14" overall dimensions.





Timothy Haerens, *Lovers*, 2018. Acrylic on plexiglass, 14" x 11".





Timothy Haerens, *Aspirations*, 2018. Acrylic on 2 – 14" x 10-7/8" canvases, 14" x 21-7/8" overall dimensions.