

# NANCY MANTER

At the age of 17, I attended Haystack-Hinkley in Hinkley, Maine, which was meant to be an advanced art experience for high school students who were too young to go to Haystack on Deer Isle. This experience was pivotal in my decision to become an artist. It was the first time that I was truly in an environment that supported young people wanting to seriously pursue the arts. I still have work from this time period, which relates to some of the art I am doing today.

In 1974 I went to the “pre-season” internship program where several students and art instructors work to prepare the facilities for the opening of the regular summer sessions. I pounded nails for the most part, shingling the outside of new cabins. Having never done any building construction, I placed the cedar shingles in a very uneven pattern, but it wasn’t until I had finished an exterior wall that I realized this. I assume they are still there today.

In a way, this experience reflects the philosophy of the place, allowing experimental processes to take place with less concern for the product. The spirit and interaction between so many creative people during these pre-sessions gave me a sense of community that set the foundation for the larger art “community” in New York City. Haystack was an environment that encouraged making connections, socially and artistically. This level of synergy I continue to strive for today.

The next summer I went to the pre-season again and was designated one of two assistants to a printmaker from Nigeria. When this teacher was detained in his country for several weeks, I stepped in and taught a class in lithography and silk-screening. I was a student at the University of New Mexico and had been studying with Garo Antresian from the Tamarind Institute.

It was my first experience teaching; my career now spans twenty-five years. Because the “students” that came to this session were professional artists for the most part, I learned as much as I taught. I was encouraged as much as anyone else to produce my own work and have it critiqued. Not only do I still have some of the prints I did that summer in my New York studio, I also use that training at Haystack as a model for my current teaching practices.

I moved into painting shortly after that period and have been a painter ever since. It is interesting how I have come full circle in my work and can identify with some of the ideas I began to explore at Haystack. The process of layering successive forms in space that are physically flat, for example, is an important element in my current work. I have also recently begun to refer back to my early memories of Maine, which I realize now have been a consistent source for my work, both formally and conceptually.

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