

Artist Statement

During my first admission to psych detox for alcohol withdrawal in 2023, I rediscovered art. I drew obsessively, using the human form in dramatic poses to cope with where my addiction had brought me. Those drawings became a language for fear, grief, and the severing of alcohol's familiar embrace.

Over the past year, I turned to oil painting as a way of peeling back addiction and confronting the fractured person underneath. My canvases are built from movement, urgency, and the cycles of trauma and recovery. Each gesture is at once violent and restorative. The goal of my art is to make visible the struggle of addiction, to create community through honesty, and to carve beauty from survival.

Curatorial Essay

Joshua Michael Schwartz's paintings arrive with urgency. They feel less like artworks produced for the marketplace and more like documents that had to be made — artifacts of survival. This authenticity of origin is their force: they are not fashionable gestures, but necessary ones.

At first encounter, the canvases overwhelm through their physicality — sweeping gestures, fractured rhythms, and fields of saturated color that seem to wrestle with themselves. Yet within the turbulence, there is compositional intelligence. Schwartz's works hold together; they balance chaos with rhythm, intensity with resolution. The viewer leaves not with the impression of raw release, but of rigor applied to lived experience.

The narrative of recovery that underpins the work is present but never didactic. These paintings do not ask for sympathy; they insist on recognition. What begins in autobiography — addiction, relapse, resilience — is transmuted into universal form. The urgency of personal struggle becomes the language of collective turbulence, legible to anyone who has known fragility, upheaval, or endurance.

Placed within contemporary American painting, Schwartz's canvases expand the conversation rather than replicate it. They summon echoes of mid-century abstraction while refusing nostalgia. Instead, they insist that gesture, color, and movement remain vital today, capable of speaking freshly to audiences in search of sincerity.

What makes Schwartz's work compelling to curators and institutions is its dual achievement: it is both deeply personal and widely resonant. The paintings are exhibition-ready in their scale and impact, and they invite dialogue across disciplines — recovery, psychology, history, and art itself. They are works that do not recede into the background of a gallery but claim space, provoke reflection, and generate collective experience.

Closing Note

Joshua Michael Schwartz is an artist of urgency, resilience, and scale. His work testifies not only to the struggle of recovery but to the enduring power of painting as a medium of truth. What begins as autobiography becomes universal: color and gesture forged into language.

For curators, collectors, and institutions, Schwartz represents a rare convergence — an authentic voice with the capacity for permanence. His paintings do not ask to be overlooked; they insist on being remembered.