

MAYA FRODEMAN GALLERY

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MAYA FRODEMAN GALLERY ANNOUNCES *FROM AN OPEN FLAME*
A SOLO EXHIBITION OF SMOKE ON PAPER BY DENNIS LEE MITCHELL

Exhibition Dates: 13 JUNE – 27 JULY 2025

JACKSON HOLE, WYOMING – MAYA FRODEMAN GALLERY is pleased to present *From An Open Flame*, a solo exhibition of recent works on paper by Dennis Lee Mitchell. These works, created entirely with smoke, will remain on view at the gallery's downtown location in Jackson Hole from June 13th through July 27th, 2025. An artist reception will be held Friday, June 13th from 5 to 7pm. The artist will be in attendance. All are welcome.

Just twelve years ago, Dennis Lee Mitchell, a trained ceramicist, developed a unique studio process to capture the visible vestiges of undulating smoke on sheets of paper. Today, the artist is producing truly masterful works on paper with the incorporeal medium—smoke—in explosive new color and the deep sooty blacks he is best known for.

From An Open Flame reveals Mitchell as much of an alchemical wizard and innovator as the master of his medium. In black and white, we are presented with strong, symmetric mandalas resembling florets like *Fruita* (2025) and a series of trembling pansies and violets that feel distinctly like motion encapsulated, such as *Inside* (2025). However, the true wonders of the exhibition are his successful experimentations in color. His *Westwater Series* (2025) resemble anemones pulsating in an otherworldly, azure blue. *Gate* (2025) is more abstract, with purplish wafts of smoke punctuated by multicolored spots that recall the innermost sanctum of an orchid. While Mitchell's process has art historical precedents, Yves Klein, Claudio Parmiggiani, and Alberto Burri among them, it's impossible to see this work as anything but an entirely fresh innovation in visual art.

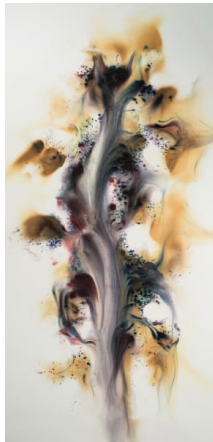
Armed with an acetylene torch, Mitchell follows a careful process of experimentation, mixing powders and combined pigments with time and heat, much like ceramics and glazing, that has led him to the unique colorways in the smoke captured on paper. The process involves intentional science enhanced by chance—sometimes, colors combine and when heated, smoke in an entirely new hue.

Mitchell is no stranger to trial and error. Each final signed work involves between 30 and 40 experimental proofs before the artist is satisfied. To provide some history, as an undergraduate, Mitchell found himself frustrated with the properties of paint. "I would put the paint on and say, well, nothing's happening; it's just sitting there." Time and materiality were not lending him the clarity of voice he sought. "I knew I wanted to use something in transition as I did my work." First, he discovered ceramics. "I could just weld the clay together [with acetylene torches]. I loved it, because it was right there, real fast, and one day, there was cheap paper next to me and I put the torch to it [...] and I was totally taken by that."

Many of Mitchell's compositions resemble rosettes, mandalas, or flowers. He comes to these forms with the aid of a spinning wheel that is eight feet in diameter and affixed to his studio wall. "I needed something to alleviate programming and to leave something to chance," says Mitchell, which is what inspired his use of the wheel. Of the centrifugal pieces, or possibly he was speaking of life generally, Mitchell said, "I am constantly looking for the center point."

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Dennis Lee Mitchell was born in Larned, Kansas, where he spent much of his childhood exploring the outdoors. He attended Kansas State University at Fort Hays where he received a B.A., followed by an M.F.A in ceramics from Arizona State University. Mitchell was a 2016-2017 recipient of a Pollock/Krasner Grant and has received two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, and a grant from the Illinois Arts Council. Mitchell's works has been critically reviewed in the Denver Art review, the Washington Post, Baltimore Sun and Chicago Art Magazine, and has been the subject of scholarly essays by Donald Kuspit, Peter Seeves, Victor M. Cassidy and Paul Klein. His work is held in many private and public collections including the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Daum Museum of Contemporary Art, the Clarke House Museum in Chicago, and the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, among others. He lives and works in the D.C. area where he has a 2,300 square foot studio suited for his experimental practice.



Dennis Lee Mitchell, *Gate*, 2025, Colored smoke on paper, 38 x 22 inches, Framed dimensions 46 x 25 ½ inches



Dennis Lee Mitchell, *Westwater Series*, 2025, Smoke and colored smoke on paper, 21 ¼ x 21 ¼ inches, Framed dimensions 26 x 26 inches



Dennis Lee Mitchell, *Inside*, 2025, Smoke on paper, 40 x 40 inches, Framed dimensions 46 x 46 inches

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Specializing in modern and contemporary art, Maya Frodeman Gallery unites artists from all over the world in a tightly curated vision. Maya Frodeman Gallery began in 2024, continuing the 23-year legacy of Tayloe Piggott's eponymous gallery, the first of its kind in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. In an expansive exhibition space in downtown Jackson Hole, the gallery pursues a rigorous schedule of exhibitions representing both emerging and established artists, encompassing unique practices of painting, sculpture, paper, photography, and printmaking.

Exhibiting contemporary giants such as Richard Fleischner, Jane Rosen, Rakuko Naito, Nicola Hicks, and Caio Fonseca alongside emerging stars like Jane Yang D'Haene and Kathryn Lynch, Maya Frodeman Gallery supports its extensive contemporary roster with close relationships with the estates of Wolf Kahn, Emily Mason, Hans Hofmann, and Esteban Vicente.

From first-time buyers to seasoned collectors, the gallery assists a wide range of clients with the intricacies of collecting contemporary art. Our staff has the knowledge and expertise to facilitate art acquisitions, advise collection management, and curate the interiors of private spaces.

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