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Andrew Levitas at Dactyl

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For the past decade Andrew Levitas has been living bi-coastal, working at his studio in Los Angeles and coming to New York as often as he can. He grew up on the Upper East Side where he immersed himself in the arts, taking up acting, music lessons, and painting. "While other kids were playing hoops, I was getting dirty in a different way – with paint," said Levitas in a recent interview with Whitewall. He dabbled in acting professionally but he always returned to painting. "Painting is the thing I could do on my own, it was my free time. It is the through line of my creative journey," said Levitas.

Last week, his exhibition "Works on Canvas and Steel" opened at Dactyl in SoHo. The show is comprised of over a dozen of his favorite works. His works on canvas, as referred to in the wonderfully simple title, are colorful abstractions comprised of paint and organic material (sometimes collected from his yard in Los Angeles). "I use as much organic material as I can from pigments and paint to different woods that I find to build my canvas," said Levitas. For someone who grew up in Manhattan, he's pretty familiar with nature.

Which may explain his continuing travels to parts of Africa like Kenya and Botswana. That's where the photography aspect of his work comes in, "I'm there to capture the beauty." With this show Levitas has taken his photography beyond documentation by using hand and laser cut steel as a canvas for his photographs to be transferred on to. Before using this process he felt a disconnect between himself, the artist, and the final photograph. The use of a camera, for him, created too much of a distance between his hand and the end product. "I'm scratching up the metal and creating designs. It's still about me and the way I'm feeling and my impression but taken a step further," he said.

Levitas thinks he'll be back in New York full-time in the future, but for now Los Angeles works as the best studio location. "When I'm in New York I don't ever feel alone. My L.A. experience is more intimate with myself. The idea of being able to be free in that way keeps me quiet," he said. For now, New York fans of his work will have to settle with viewing his work at show's like Dactyl and the upcoming Aids Community Research Initiative event in June where he has donated work for charity. Levitas predicts the move back home will be worth the wait, "I expect that my work will turn in a great way when I have a studio in New York." We look forward to following up on that.