

## *Absence of Presence*

Jody Isaacson at Greg Kucera Gallery

October 14 - November 20, 2021

For her current show at the Greg Kucera Gallery, printmaker Jody Isaacson employs the medium's traditional techniques on materials new to her. In residencies with Elizabeth Nields in Gilbertsville, New York and then at Township 10 in Marshall, North Carolina, Isaacson has crafted a body of work using wood, ceramic and paper to feel the "Absence of Presence," deepening her connection to the Northwest imagery she has mined for fifty years.

A native of Seattle, Isaacson now lives and works in upstate New York, but since the death of her son in Puget Sound—eight miles from her childhood home—she has often returned to these waters to seek solace and reconciliation with the overwhelming fact of this loss.

Isaacson's son had a tattoo of one of her woodcuts on his right arm, and she often envisions this arm suspended in the waters of the Sound. Contemplating Matisse's *Dance* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Isaacson recognized that the circle of dancers' arms in this painting expresses her continuing connection with her son—simultaneously to hold on and to let go. She carved the image of his tattoo onto pine planks and printed them on clay slabs and reconstructed Matisse's circle of dancers, removing their bodies to leave only arms—hers and her son's—in wood and ceramic.

Isaacson has long paid close attention to two masters of the woodcut, the German artist Käthe Kollwitz and the Japanese artist Hokusai, and the Japanese movement form Butoh, all of which deal with the cycles of life and death. Kollwitz' *Die Mütter* (The Mothers) helped her deepen her connection with those who have lived through the deaths of children, and Hokusai's *Lantern Spectre* is a ghost that is both a presence without a body, and a lantern that brings light.

Presence of Absence.



*DANCE, AFTER MATISSE, 2021,*  
watercolor, wood, porcelain, silver leaf and ash, 101.75 x 153.5 inches



Original carved woodblocks for *WOODGRAIN, 1989,*