



Tiny Constructions - Playful and Poignant

July 5, 2011

by Pat Rogers

Craig Kane makes the smallest artworks you'll probably ever see. From afar, his "CONSTRUCTS" installation at Art Sites gives the impression of smudges or tangles of material on an otherwise white wall.

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Craig Kane's installation, "CONSTRUCTS," at Art Sites Gallery.



Everything changes after getting up close: When you're near enough to zero in on his art, it's difficult to look away.



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"CONSTRUCTS" is a series of tiny artworks arranged in a single horizontal line in a large room at Art Sites gallery. There are 88 works in the show.

Each piece in the installation was made on site. This is Kane's preferred way of working: "I really respond to the place where I'm working," he said in a phone interview on Father's Day.

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"Ancient History" by Craig Kane.

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"My ideal is to make art pieces in the space they're exhibited."

A large part of his process is staying in the moment and letting the art unfold as it may, he said. Scale is crucial. Keeping it minuscule keeps him focused, Kane said. With focus comes artwork that's immediate, authentic and reveals a story.

"For me, narration happens," Kane said. "One piece informs the next and the next."

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"Turned on, Turned Away" by Craig Kane.



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Kane began working small around 20 years ago. His decision to go tiny hinged on his available studio space and his reaction to the large and even larger paintings being exhibited in NYC in the late '80s.

Kane's minuscule paintings are made in his Brooklyn studio. During installation, paintings become stand-alone pieces or are incorporated into art constructions. Strips and sections of photographs are utilized the same way.

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In the Art Sites installation, patches of photographs and paintings helped develop multiple themes woven through the exhibition. One running theme is art history and art making. Another is family and the artist's reflections on fatherhood. Another is nostalgia.

"He's using his own life as a study yet putting in a wider context," said Art Sites director Glynis Berry. "Themes bounce around and cross and link. It's almost like entering someone's thought process."

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"Retro Painting" by Craig Kane.



"5 Paintings" by Craig Kane.



"Paint Your Own God Damn Painting" by
Craig Kane.

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Humor, twists of phrase and the unexpected are part of the joy Kane infuses into his art. Keeping the fun in art making is important too, he said. It allows him to be self-critical while keeping his role as artist light.

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"With Money" by Craig Kane.

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The diversity of art making methods is one reason why Berry is a fan of Kane's work, she said. Some pieces are only words written on the wall. Others include wall paint scratched away to become an integral part of an art work.



“So” by Craig Kane.

Titles are important in Kane’s installation, Berry said. They give insight into the piece and interact with the artwork in a meaningful way, she said.



“Other Son” by Craig Kane.

Mostly, Berry admires the way Kane’s art reaches for the sublime.

“Kane makes his oil painting and his constructions look real simple so it’s almost about not being anything or anywhere,” Berry said. “It’s subtle,” she continued. “They say something about insubstantial and about the many layers of being fleeting. They reject size and invoke shadow. There’s something wonderful about it...They speak to the discussion of ‘What art is.’ and ‘What’s it all about.’”



Preparing to make art at Art Sites. Courtesy of Craig Kane.



Preparing to make art at Art Sites. Courtesy of Craig Kane.



Preparing to make art at Art Sites. Courtesy of Craig Kane.



“[Sigh]” by Craig Kane.



Craig Kane
installing at Art
Sites. Courtesy of
Art Sites.

BASIC FACTS: "CONSTRUCTS" by Craig Kane was exhibited from May 21 to June 26, 2011 at Art Sites in Riverhead. Paintings by Bastienne Schmidt were exhibited simultaneously.

Kane exhibited with Art Sites in 2009 in the group exhibition, "Found," curated by Andrea Cote. His work has been shown in Beijing, China; Brooklyn, NY; San Diego, CA; and more. His studio is in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Art Sites: www.artsitesgallery.com/

Craig Kane: www.craigkaneart.com/

MORE: Craig Kane's work is part of the exhibition, "Spiral Bound: Notebooks by artists from New York and San Diego" at 214a Gallery at National University, La Mesa, CA. The show runs from June 18 to July 16, 2011. www.nu.edu/Calendar/Spiral-Bound.html

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