



Gavin Zeigler Retrospect: Stocks, Pennies and Peep Show Imagery Woven With Paint

June 22, 2013

by Pat Rogers

More is hidden than revealed when taking a first glance at the artwork in Gavin Zeigler's 30-year retrospective exhibited at Peter Marcelle Gallery. Bright Dayglo colors beckon. Strong grids created with paint compel a closer look. So does the possibility of discovering what lies deep within the abstract paintings. In nearly all of the works on view, a grid anchors the composition and provides a safety net that encourages diving visually into the depths of colors and textures implied beneath the surface of the artwork.

Yet even a considered look may not fully reveal the intricacies that contribute Zeigler's to art. Each painting (with a few exceptions) is meticulously layered with bands of paper history or human-fashioned items designed for practical purposes. There could be shredded strips of inactive stock certificates, patches of historic receipts from the 1900s or imagery inspired by erotic peep shows. Sanded and painted pennies beckon in one series installed on a singular wall. Sanded keys are the armature for another series of works.



"A Red River Runs Through It" by Gavin Zeigler, 2013. Acrylic, Paper, Mixol, and Mixed Media on Wood Panel, 36 x 60 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

The layered patches of paper or pennies or other items are selected to imbibe the painting with history and to suggest stories lived by others. All of the items worked into the art have their own history: they've been repeatedly handled and passed from person to person and radiate a subtle life of their own. The use of ordinary objects gives credence to the theory that collective memories of a culture can be found in ordinary items left behind, said Zeigler.



"Such Great Heights" by Gavin Zeigler, 2012. Acrylic, Paper, and Mixed Media on Wood Panel, 18 x 24 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

The exhibition, "Gavin Zeigler: A Thirty Year Retrospective of Painting and Sculpture, 1983 to 2013" provides a glimpse into Zeigler's own history as a painter and a sculptor. The show includes rare examples of his earliest paintings before he began collaging history into his art. This includes the paintings "Dog No. 1" and "Fish No. 1." Both works do not contain collaging. They also represent the early workings of Zeigler where his paintings were directly inspired by specific imagery which is reflected in the artworks, said Zeigler.

"Dog No. 1" was inspired by the Victrola dog, whose iconic pose was seated and staring at the record player. Zeigler began wondering what the dog would look like if it stood up and we were able to see another vantage point, he said. The painting is Zeigler's answer to the question. This is the first time the painting has been exhibited.



"Dog No. 1" by Gavin Zeigler, 1992. Acrylic and Mixed Media on Linen, 40 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

"Fish No. 1" was meant to represent a fish-any fish. The artwork traveled a direct line between observation and the making of the work.



"Fish No. 1" by Gavin Zeigler, 1981. Acrylic, Modeling Paste, Gel Medium, and Mixed Media on Canvas, 26 x 20 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Likewise, Zeigler's sculptures begin with direct observation from life where an image inspires the muse to transform three-dimensional material into art. For instance, "Lightning #1" is inspired by bolts of lightning thrown by Mother Nature.



"Lightning, #1 " by Gavin Zeigler, 2010. Bronze on Bronze Base, Edition of Six with one A/P 72 inches high. Courtesy of the artist.

Other sculptures have been inspired by figurative paintings of mythical deities, scenes observed in nature and scenes captured in paint by master artists. Angular shapes are often the building blocks for Zeigler's bronze sculptures. Their sure shapes give rise to expressionistic exploration as Zeigler explores forms and abstracts the imagery from their inspiration.



"Orchard At Night" by Gavin Zeigler, 2003-2004. Bronze on Black Marble Base, Edition of 6 with one A/P, 5 x 12 x 6 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

If Zeigler's paintings could be considered a way to meld history with the artist's imagination to make art that encourage viewer exploration, the sculptures are almost opposite. In making them, the sculptures provide exploration for Zeigler that result in artworks that give rise to emotive reactions by viewers to the solid and definable forms. Zeigler sculptures are mostly monochromatic and minimalist providing an almost startling contrast to his colorful and bold abstract paintings.



"Favorable Awakening" by Gavin Zeigler, 2013. Acrylic, Paper, Mixol, and Mixed Media on Wood Panel, 40 x 60 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Taken as a whole, "Gavin Zeigler: A Thirty Year Retrospective of Painting and Sculpture, 1983 to 2013" provides a window into Zeigler's journey as an artist and plants viewers firmly into his here and now. Most of the works were made in recent years and most of the art in the show are paintings.

Nearly all the paintings feature a new methodology Zeigler developed to compact inches of collaged paper into a single flat plain. This incongruity adds another layer of wonderment for viewers, he explained. Many have trouble believing that inches of historic paper could be flattened into a smooth surface where texture is for the eyes rather than the touch.



Partial installation view of "Gavin Zeigler: A Thirty Year Retrospective of Painting and Sculpture, 1983 to 2013" at Peter Marcelle Gallery. Photo by Mike Dupre.

BASIC FACTS: “Gavin Zeigler: A Thirty Year Retrospective of Painting and Sculpture, 1983 to 2013” is exhibited from June 8 to 23, 2013 at Peter Marcelle Gallery, 2411 Main, Bridgehampton, NY 11932. www.petermarcellegallery.com.

“Lightning, #1 ” (2010) will be exhibited at the Sag Harbor Whaling & Historical Museum starting June 28 in conjunction with the opening of “MADE in Sag Harbor.” The exhibition was curated by Peter Marcelle. www.sagharborwhalingmuseum.org.

Additional artworks by Gavin Zeigler can be found by visiting www.gavinzeigler.com.

© 2013 Hamptons Art Hub LLC. All rights reserved.