



# ART REVIEW: Caught in the Afterglow - Jameson Ellis Paintings

February 27, 2014  
by Esperanza Leon

The Jameson Ellis “Paintings” exhibition currently on view in the Tasting Room at Wölffer Estate Vineyard is one indication of a new direction the owners have taken since the unexpected death of founder Christian Wölffer, in 2008.

Mr. Wölffer’s heirs evidently want to introduce a cutting-edge, 21<sup>st</sup> century aesthetic by hosting exhibitions of contemporary art. The rustic, “old-world charm” décor of this space stands in stark contrast with the slick, eye-popping colors of Ellis’s two canvases and four more subtle watercolors.

This exhibition is all the more appropriate for its space because the artist’s juxtaposition of old and new, art and technology, seems very fitting for a vineyard where centuries-old viniculture is combined with continued innovation in winemaking.

It is a welcome change in a room previously dominated by a collection of somber, forgettable artworks. Meant for lingering while sampling wines and artisanal cheeses, the Tasting Room allows for a conscientious perusal of the works on exhibit—though I wonder how many visitors actually are intrigued or take the time.

Ellis has a known proclivity for technology, engineering, and science, rooted in his upbringing near a military industrial complex in Maryland. He creates his art in a manner more akin to fabrication.

One could say without slighting the artist that he “manufactures” his paintings, as sources say, for example, that he actually uses a six-foot-long brush he fabricated to paint his canvases. This is an attempt to erase the hand of the artist and the painstaking gesture, though it would seem that, inevitably, the artist’s hand remains visible. Small imperfections and choice of materials remove these works from the realm of machine-made. They’re simply not perfect, and thankfully so.

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“Untitled” by Jameson Ellis, 2007. Oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches.

Ellis’s paintings repel and attract like electromagnetic forces. Despite their aloof appearance, one can meditate on, if not approach, these untitled works (all dated 2007, perhaps from his solo show “Atomic Sublime” that same year at Glenn Horowitz Bookseller in East Hampton).

Their quiet noise, the repeated microwave patterns of television static, offer a representation of the afterglow of creation, pointing at once to the past and the future, to the origin of the universe and its ultimate fate through continual change and expansion.

It is as if Ellis had captured the Big Bang fallout: he transmits the leftover heat and, beyond that, the absolute coldness in vibrantly hued swaths on canvas or glowing watercolor stains on paper. The viewer is merely caught in the afterglow, beautiful and awe-inspiring. It has to be said, without wanting to sound glib: this pairs well with wine.



“Untitled” by Jameson Ellis, 2007. Oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches.

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**BASIC FACTS:** “Jameson Ellis: Paintings” remain on view through March 9, 2014 at Wolffer Estate Vineyard, The Tasting Room, 139 Sagg Road, Sagaponack, NY 11962. The show was curated by Jess Frost. [www.wolffer.com](http://www.wolffer.com).

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