



Scott McIntire: A Close-Up View of The Life Around Us

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by Charles A. Riley II

"I am trying to make the invisible visible," Scott McIntire declares, issuing himself a timeless impossible challenge. His latest efforts to meet that challenge, and more, have taken the form of an exhibition of thoughtful and thought-provoking paintings scheduled at the Peter Marcelle Project gallery in Southampton, N.Y. from August 15 through August 23, 2015

His Greenport studio overlooks the backyard garden from which he draws so much of the inspiration for bold large-scale paintings of flowers, dragonflies and bees, tendrils of vines and other visual stimuli from nature. On the walls of the studio are the brightly colored, deftly articulated paintings for his upcoming show, "Environmental Intimacy on the East End."

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Scott McIntire in his studio. Photo by Ken Korch.

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As the artist pointed out in a recent interview: "I use 'intimacy' in the title of the show because it manages to convey the sensual close-up view I am offering of the life that goes on around us. I am trying to get people to think about that life, and its fragility, such as the perils of being a pollinator at a time when so many hives are disappearing."

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"Perils of a Pollinator" by Scott McIntire. Enamel on canvas.

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Unlike many artists with an environmentalist agenda, the cheerfully laconic McIntire does not beat his audience over the head with rhetoric. His bait and switch proffers beauty and then releases the message, which may have a sting (one major painting is about fracking) but also quiet poetry.

Two of the largest and most complex paintings in the show, *In Search of Balance* and *Fear of Fracking*, are captivating and rich troves of imagery, including a magnificently rendered tree that

was standing by the road until a June storm felled it. At the base of the tree, a diamond pattern of black and white has the kind of optical hum associated with the painting of Bridget Riley.



“In Search of Balance” by Scott McIntire, 2014. Enamel on canvas, 24 x 96 inches.



“Fear of Fracking” by Scott McIntire, 2014. Enamel on canvas, 48 x 60 inches.

McIntire notes that something wonderfully natural and subconscious took over during the process: “I don’t paint anymore with the whole thing predetermined. For instance, in this painting I wanted something black and white in there and it just seemed like the right symbol for fracking.”

Originally from Oregon, McIntire lives in Greenport with his wife, Lori Hollander, who is also an artist and jewelry designer. He has the quiet strength and charm of a former varsity football player and his level of technique in the studio permits him to take on anything, including the dark energy of the unseen world in his garden. His sure hand comes from painting detail pinstripes on cars and working in graphic design, but it has turned to the higher purposes of fine art.

One of the most intriguing compositional devices in his works is a color bar that floats on the surface of many paintings. “The color bars are not just taken from the palette of the painting,” he said. “That would be too easy. I start off with a color then I proceed with what works side by side.” McIntire is an arch-colorist of the first order. He studied color theory at the Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles and taught it at the Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, Oregon. In his paintings, he beams his potent palette of secondary tones on minute phenomena.

The high-volume chromaticism is a reminder that color itself is vibratory energy and has its impact on our minds beyond wavelengths at assorted degrees of variation. The effects of color interact on the level of energy fields on both sides of the viewer’s lenses. This is what makes this kind of chromaticism the most powerful of all the effects in the repertoire of the painter, and the one most likely to be adequate to the immense task McIntire has set himself here, the unveiling of the concealed.



“Sumac Energy Field” by Scott McIntire, 2012. Enamel on canvas, 36 x 60 inches.

Subtlety is in the technique as well as the composition, as in the large *August Late Afternoon*, ablaze with glorious reds but, bottom center, with the quiet emergence of a grisaille truck just visible under a garage door about a third open (glimpsed on Oregon Road in Cutchogue). The show-stopping *Delusion of Don Quixote in Watermill* is a huge, bright-toned work of stunning realism that slips its psychotic energy agenda by us silently.



“August Late Afternoon” by Scott McIntire. Enamel on canvas.



“The Delusion of Quixote in Water Mill” by Scott McIntire, 2008. Enamel on canvas, 60 x 48 inches.

“It is a different type of energy,” the artist said, “the mental state of the protagonist. In the windmill painting I am using swirling marks as a reference to Don Quixote’s delusional misinterpretation of his surroundings and his frenzied state of mind.”

Cervantes’s “Don Quixote” is itself an epochal meditation on the mind’s struggle with illusion and the unseen. McIntire captures its comic note deftly, with the Knight of the Doleful Countenance heading one way on his chopper and Sancho Panza, the most beloved sidekick in the annals of the novel, putt-putting in the other direction on a scooter, while Dulcinea smiles from above.

Nothing could be more subtle than painting what the eye struggles to register in his garden, including “no-see-ums” (ceratopogonidae), the tiny insects that hover in elliptical clouds in many of the paintings. Like the fragrance of honeysuckle and the radiant hum of the beating wings of the many insects he captures on the surface of his paintings with the meticulous care of an entomologist (he is also a birdwatcher and avid gardener), these are the quiet pleasures of the natural world, cast in heroic scale on his canvases.



“Poppy Blue Dasher” by Scott McIntire. Enamel on canvas.

One smaller work, *Orange Bluet on Bittersweet*, combines the linear dance of a dry bittersweet vine with an odd pattern in ultramarine blue oscillating in rich black from left to right: it is the voice print

of the great horned owl, transcribed in a painting you can hear!



“Orange Bluet on Bittersweet” by Scott McIntire, 2014. Enamel on canvas,
19 x 23.5 inches.

Pressed for a studio secret (did he add his own abstract expressionist twist to the vine?), McIntire demurred, producing the thing itself, a section of bittersweet with a loop at its end. “I was trying to get that abstract, calligraphic line and all I needed was this section of bittersweet. You don’t need to do anything else,” he said with the wide-eyed smile of an enthusiastic biology teacher.

While pragmatists these days denigrate art as a superfluous luxury, for others the expectations of what powerful painting can accomplish are sufficiently elevated to verge on the fond hope that these prodigious acts of hand and mind can deliver nothing less than the impossible. Just as philosophy has the paradoxical (Wittgenstein’s “green-red”), physics the theoretical (Einstein’s curved space and superstrings), literature the oxymoronic (“darkness visible” from the blind Milton), art has a long and miraculous history of mind-bending moments of defying logic.

From Giotto and the magic of perspective to the fourth dimension of Cubism, the movement in a static form (Rodin’s sculpture) or the shimmer of the night sky (Van Gogh painting the energy patterns of the heavens) and the sea’s sublimely ceaseless motion (Turner, Vija Celmins, Courbet, Monet) viewing art leaves us shaking our heads in wonder at the audacity of artists who take on the challenge of the impossible.

Enter into these Quixotic lists Scott McIntire, offering nothing less than the visual evocation of invisible energy fields, the existence and nature of which are barely grasped by the world’s most advanced scientists. Bear in mind that these paintings come from the studio not long after the discovery of the Higgs boson, the most momentous advance in particle physics in our time. McIntire has committed his considerable technical resources and wit to a concept of breathtaking ambition and originality.

BASIC FACTS: Scott McIntire’s art can be viewed at www.scottmcintire.com. His solo show “Environmental Intimacy on the East End” will exhibited at [Peter Marcelle Project](#) from August 15 – 23, 2015. The gallery is located at 4 North Main Street, Southampton, N.Y. 11968.

A solo show of McIntire’s photography selections from his book “The Backyard Project” will be presented at the Floyd Memorial Library in Greenport, N.Y. from August 1 to September 9, 2015. McIntire will give a lecture and slideshow presentation on August 1, 2015 from 3 to 5 p.m. at the library revealing the project where he documented “all the mammals, birds and insects” he could find on his 1/4 acre Greenport property. To see the publication and read about the project, visit

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