

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

Flaunt
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IF YOU DON'T HUNT IT DOWN AND KILL IT, IT WILL HUNT YOU DOWN AND KILL YOU

An Interview with Artist Anthony Pearson

Anthony Pearson's artwork gives the viewer a sense of movement, fluidity, like weather contained in a frame. Or timing: the amorphous crawl of the ocean floor. Pearson's photographs, tablets, and bronze reliefs feel organic and solitary, yet intimate. Here, the artist discusses his creative process, the importance of order in the workspace, and symmetry.

Proceduralists theorize that a lawn mower in a garage is a lawn mower, but a lawn mower in an art gallery is a work of art. In terms of your creative process, when and how do the various elements in your work—the solarized silver gelatin and the goopy hydrocal—become art?

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The process of making work begins with a set of ideas that dictate a set of parameters. Once the parameters are set I work quickly and become very immersed. This activity is often fairly loose. When finally there is a large collection of objects or images, I then choose the ones that I connect with and that are meaningful to me. These selections become works of art by attending carefully to them. Intense effort goes into the finishing, fitting and framing of them. Once they are suitable for presentation they take their place and become artworks.

Describe your workspace.

My workspace is a small freestanding industrial building in Culver City. It is an indoor/outdoor space that is very private. It is painted out white and has a natural light. It features skylights, windows and a roll-up door. It is kept without clutter. Unused tools and materials are stashed. The space is used for production at times and for viewing at times. It is a peaceful and meditative space. The space is prepared and attended to carefully and frequently.

There seems to be a lot of play with contrast in your work – very pronounced but organic disparities in shape, color, and texture. What is this saying about you, personally?

I am first concerned with the format and the choice of materials, then later with the image. The rigidity of the format allows for an open relationship with multiple forms and images. These varied forms and images are always held together by the material and conceptual format. There is a play with gesture, expressionism, minimalism, constructivism and other tendencies all within this framework. I believe this tendency comes from a preoccupation with types, taxonomy, and collections. I believe this tendency relates back to photography.

Some artists have called symmetry sensuous, while others have described it as strict. What are your thoughts on symmetry?

In the case of the new work symmetry is necessary. This is because it guides the process of etching the slabs. If I were currently dealing with drawing or painting I would not use symmetry in the same way. It is important for these works to become surfaces, not paintings, so symmetry is an ally in accomplishing this. Symmetry, when worked heavily, can lead to overall texture. With the etched plasters I am interested in symmetry for this reason. When the work shifts again, I will be interested in asymmetry.

Inherently, works of art are fleeting, disposable. What are your thoughts on the mortality of a piece?

I want my work to be collected, housed, preserved and conserved so it will last through the ages. Naturally, this is the goal of many artists. Nevertheless, that is not the motivation for making the work. The motivation is to add to and eventually complete a series of pieces that will create the body of work as a whole.

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