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Response to “(re)narrate” Exhibit

The first pieces that I examined were the series of three modern-style illustrations that were hanging on the display median facing east, towards the street. They looked like computer enhanced children’s drawings; two-dimensional, simplistic abstractions of human faces and ambiguous shapes that attempted to describe... something. I found myself frustrated with their simplicity. This emotion *would have* been an effective vehicle for getting the images’ messages across, but the allegories depicted were too vague. If an image is created with these sorts of free form objects, then the purpose or thesis of the image should be more obvious. Otherwise they would appear to have *no* point or purpose, and therefore could not possibly instill any emotion in the viewer. The compositions were certainly colorful and balanced; but the underlying meanings of two of them were lost in an ocean of endless comparisons. However, the third *did* seem to have a more specific purpose as a satire about consumerism. A ridiculously large yellow rectangle (presumably food) was being shoved into the mouth of the human figure. This was the most successful piece because the silly subject and childish style complimented one another. It was a silly truth, told through the eyes of a child.

Next on my clockwise exploration was a display wall covered in children’s doodles and stories. I wasn’t sure if they were *part* of the exhibit so I didn’t spend any time observing them.

The two large newspaper clipping collages intrigued me. I reacted well to the fantastic interplay between figure and ground created by the outlines of the characters. The articles and headlines filled those figures as to describe the motive behind the characters’ actions. In the first one, the stressed out businessman guillotining himself was painted on articles of business and violence. The bikini-wearing transsexual in the second piece appeared to be urinating on women’s lingerie articles; thereby rebelling against cultural norms and schema.

The next few paintings hung in the shadow of the previous work. I remember that none of them really showed me outstanding technical prowess, nor were the compositions risky. That is why the captions were so effective. Each image showed one or more people in a normal stance or position for a picture or painting, but the captions of each character were unanticipated statements of exactly what the character was thinking at that time. I remember one character was standing next to his wife saying something like, “I want to touch your boobs.” This statement was shocking and hilarious, thus adding those positive emotions to the rest of the image.

Down the row from that was a collection of really cool multimedia projects. I could see the layers and layers of media that were applied, and could appreciate the time and energy that must’ve been spent on them.

Hanging on the wall of the outcropped display board facing west was a large, dominant tint painting. Its morbid color scheme commanded my attention. An infant was standing in a sort of virtual living room. Several spots in the painting were “zoomed in,” pointing out all of the possible accidental injuries a child could suffer in a household environment. Some focused on electrical sockets or table corners. Others were just dangerous items like a hot iron. These floating worries were all painted with a ghostly white, which gave the composition a strong, nightmarish quality. I didn’t realize how

chilly the showroom was until I stared at this painting for several minutes.

I've always gotten a kick out of Bret's work, and this occasion was no exception. His humorous political satires always get intense responses. There was a repeated theme: the thoughts or agendas of each political head were erupting from their thought bubbles. In more than one piece of art, George W. had a perpetually empty thought bubble. Other recurring themes included war machines, sections of the American flag, and large oil pumps. The cluttered objects added a powerful element of frustration that denoted the fluster of issues and controversies that politicians' are constantly fueling. Aside from the images themselves, the paper also had a very lasting effect. It reminded me of parchment, or really old paper. That really fit the political subject matter because I instantly associated his prints with the Declaration of Independence, or The Constitution.

Amongst the remaining works on the back wall was a series that illustrated several metaphors about ego and personality. Although obvious and cliché, I made note of the compositional flow from one piece to the next. The objects lead the eye on a comfortable and interesting path, while the metaphors varied enough in style and tempo to keep me interested. Some of the frames were just downright silly, but added an appropriate flavor of emotion and purpose. One of the first ones was simply, "Don't let your head get big" with an image of a girl with a gigantic head and small face. It just made me chuckle.

The last piece I'll mention was the framed painting of a desert landscape in which a man and a woman were walking with two aliens towards the bright lights of their car. High in the background is the spaceship, and it too was emitting a bright light. What forced me to traverse across the room to view this painting were its color relationships. The yellow headlights literally blasted the warm colors onto the painting. The people and the aliens really stood out amongst all the more heavily saturated purples and blues. I wanted to mention something about counterbalancing those warm colors, but I can't remember if it's a criticism or a compliment. I think there should have been some hints of sun rise or sunset oranges off to the right to even out all the warm colors on the left side of the picture plane. Unless it had that, in which case, it's perfect, and I'm still right.