

The Drawers - Headbones Gallery

Contemporary Drawing, Sculpture and Works on Paper

September 11 - October 25, 2008

FRESH POP NYC

Billy Copley
Jesse McCloskey

Featuring new sculpture by Ed Giordano Jr.

Commentaries by Julie Oakes

Fresh Pop NYC Billy Copley & Jesse McCloskey - Copyright © 2008, Headbones Gallery

This catalog was created for the exhibition "Fresh Pop NYC"
at Headbones Gallery, The Drawers, Toronto, Canada, September 11 - October 25, 2008

Commentaries by Julie Oakes. Copyright © 2008, Julie Oakes

Artwork Copyright ©
Billy Copley
Jesse McCloskey
Ed Giordano Jr.

Rich Fog Micro Publishing, printed in Toronto, 2008 - Layout and Design, Richard Fogarty

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 copyright act or in writing from Headbones Gallery. Requests for permission to use these images should be addressed in writing to the respective artist c/o Headbones Gallery. www.headbonesgallery.com

ISBN: 978-1-926605-00-5

RICH FOG



Micro Publishing
Toronto Canada

Pop Art. The rehashing of popular culture through the use of media, advertising and consumer based imagery.

'Pop' is also an outburst that causes an explosion and Pop Art saw the literal use referenced in such pieces as Eduardo Paolozzi's 1947 collage in which the word 'pop' is coming from a revolver and then again in 1957 when Richard Hamilton (*Just What Is It that Makes Today's Homes so Different, so Appealing?*) depicted a body builder holding a giant lollipop on which he placed the word 'pop'.

There is an aspect to pop art that did blow fine arts off of the elevated peaks where it had reigned in high and barely-touchable castles of elevated subject matter or medium based concepts, such as in the work of the abstract expressionists. The subject matter of the pop art of the fifties and sixties derived matter, not from the aesthetically sacrosanct realms, but from the supermarket, common-man-or-woman's wall paper, Polaroid photographs, multiples, kitsch and mechanical renditions of pap that had been previously deemed devoid of gesture. The pop artists were as cool as a cucumber.

But pop can lose its fizz if left open too long and turn into a sugary listless mixture of ingredients - unpalatable. How to freshen the pop? Come up with a new recipe for translating the insights that result from our cultural dilemma and va-va-va-voom! Fresh Pop!

We have chosen three artists from NYC whose work, although each from authentic and personal orientation, associates with Pop Art.

FRESH



POP NYC



Billy Copley has been working with popular imagery from California to New York City (where he was a friend of Warhol). His snappy cartoon-ish style combines with a painterly, processed maturity to yield a fresh take on pop.

Jesse McCloskey is the young renegade. He's plied a New England narrative to a pop consciousness and freely emoted. The result - fresh pop, though a little hot.

Ed Giordano, with humanitarian angst, shows the plight of the common man in his most disadvantaged insecurity. With a sculptural technique that relates to the work of George Segal, he presents the popular dilemma with the freshness of a well placed slap.

Billy Copley

In the early days of Pop art, evidence of the artists hand gradually disappeared from art in favor of techniques of mechanical reproduction. This reinforced the concept of the multiple. Individuality was replaced by mass production.

Fifty years later, artists once again crave the authentic self. A one of a kind approach, recognizing the individual. The unique is once again desirable. The more subjective arrangement of images and surface treatment is the fresh take of Billy Copley's recent works.

Working with pre-painted papers, Copley seldom leaves a flat uninterrupted color field. He uses a rich range of colors that are created with patterns, washes and gradations, transmutations layered and collaged so that each area is unique. This also makes for illusions of depth which in turn allows the push and pull of the picture to be activated.

Within each piece there is a maximum of means and a maximizing of the opportunity to present a surface.

Rather than trying to convince us that there is a distance from the imagery, Copley acknowledges his engagement in the process and thus encourages the subsequent engagement by the viewer.

Copley melds the abstract and subjective with the discipline of an obsessive, precise aesthetic. With freedom to borrow from kitsch and sentimental rag barrels, he snips, pastes, prints, rubs and paints his way into a new corner, a place of no return for there are so many layers of visuals that the process of looking back to the beginning is indeterminate.

Relishing the creative process, there is a lip-smacking tastiness in the riot of elements, recognized and strange, within each work. Elements balance precariously in a circus ring like juggling balls.



Roses - 2007, Acrylic and rice paper collage on canvas 62 x 52 inches

While these appear to be happy works, there is also something disquieting about them. They scream for attention much like a child at play.

These works however, are mature no matter how loud they scream. Through the Power of visual presence, Copley extracts a varied beauty from the wacky objects and patterns he juxtaposes using styles from hard edge to mottled surfaces, visual treatments that carry braggadocio as if they were developed to wow the viewer.

With a painterly, psychedelic perspective, the foreground competes with the background and the relationship between the visual spaces becomes

queered and all the elements fold into each other.

Billy Copley seems to be pushing all of the buttons at once and taking us on a ride that brings forth a thrilling if somewhat queasy jubilation. The imagery propels the precepts of earlier pop art into fast-forward (or perhaps fast-reverse) and this results in giddy interesting work which like the wackiness of Saturday morning cartoons is full of adventurous changes.

So with Copley, his use of the familiar - be it pin-up girl, rose, polka dot or grid becomes new again and creates a sensational pop! For those who get their kicks out of art, it's a rush. Copley gives a lot of energy to the work.



Finger & Spring - 2006, Acrylic and rice paper collage on paper 41 x 29 inches



The Strangler – 2004, Oil on canvas, 21 x 27 inches

Jesse McCloskey



Bird Hunt – 2005, Vinyl paint and paper collage on paper, 50 x 38 inches

There is a depth to the narrative behind Jesse McCloskey's shocking expletive where the dog/devil and girl/witch act out. The works of Warhol, Lichtenstein, Rauschenberg and Johns used references that came from childhood and adolescence - guns, toys, cartoons, maps, targets, cars, posters, advertisements, televisions and more. Their youth had come from the upswing of consumerism and their interest had been informed by the milieu of a prosperous America. Jesse McCloskey grew up in New England, home of the witch trials, Plymouth Rock and the Mayflower, Pocahontas and then the normal - bad boys, naughty girls and dogs. Mix these essential components in with a Fine Arts education replete with references from art history and there is a clue to McCloskey's secret ingredients.

There is an acknowledgment of suffering, wrongdoing, struggle and righteousness in the squiring of tales such as the one of a little girl of four years was

tied, hands to feet, during the Inquisition - that in reality was based on property rights - in order to extract information on the devil. Quite the story to tell. Or Pocahontas spraying graffiti as the puritans wiped out her people. The struggle is not so easy to categorise as being 'renegade' or 'reactionary' once the impetus behind this work is explored. Abhorrent situations can be spellbinding so when he studies historical reference books for content of a nasty nature, gobbles it up and spews it out with a frenetic energy, the witchcraft has begun.

There are stories that are common to cultures and ages that serve as templates for the common narrative of the time: the creation myths, the passion plays, the Greek tragedies, theatre del arte, classical allegories and biblical morality tales. The action within them serves to illustrate the temper of the time. Jesse McCloskey appears to have developed a current common narrative within the consistent imagery of the dog/devil and the girl/witch that he has used in paintings and drawings over a number of years. Are the dog and the girl with their hedonistic foreplay and wild abandon an apt metaphor for a debauched culture or is his work a release for both himself as the perpetrator of the imaginings and for the voyeuristic perspective?

What might have seemed to be solely a flight of fancy into naughty-making, has now gained the credence of a commitment and the story has even progressed to encompass raunchier sexual exploits with more brutal retaliation against the harassment metered out by the 'other', be it dog or girl. This work is not as simplistic as the pitching of good against evil, despite the angelic face of the girl or the gradual leaning of the physiognomy of the dog to goat-ishness for the girl gets down and dirty as well. Neither is hanging on to appearances and in fact the girl has been showing her witch-y side, throwing back the liquor with

apparent relish and riding the strangled canine hard.

This is permissive abandon, bestiality and bad messy fun. There seems to be no moral amidst the searing colors and libidinous sweeps of paint. From the contemporary awareness of a world with a political climate of masked purposes, incomprehensible corporate power-mongering and materialistic prompts, it's a relief to spend some quality time following the scatological incorrectness of McCloskey's girl and dog.

He is uncovering malaise, recognizing it and placing it in the face of a complacent society with as much aplomb as he can muster with his expressionistic handling of the picture surface. None of the cucumber cool of the early pop guys; he pushes and pulls the surface with vehemence and extracts the energy needed for his un-didactic wake-up call.

Jesse McCloskey is the *Red Bull* of pop.



Attack In The Park – 2005, Collage and Tempera on paper, 38 x 50 inches



Park Art – 2002, Paint and paper collage on paper, 38 x 50 inches

Ed Giordano Jr.

The acknowledgement of superficiality that the pop pioneers purported was punctuated by the poignancy of works by George Segal and Edward Kienholz. Both eschewed the religiosity towards materials that had come before them by using ordinary plaster as the end result rather than a step in the process of sculpting. They took found objects and set the context. They addressed topics that were psychological and they looked at contemporary consumerist orientation as the root of dysfunction. 'Loneliness' was not just a word in a pop song but the dripping faucet that was draining the resources from a morally depleted society.

Giordano had studied with Segal and the influence is felt. But he has distilled the final product, bringing the angst to its most intoxicating level and the plaster personifications cloy with a chalky under taste like the suspicious milky drink in Rosemary's baby served as an annunciation with a slightly demonic gene.

Ed Giordano's prognosis is bleak. His typical man seems unable to move off of his solitary and compromised perch. He is imprisoned in words, covered by statistics, pinioned by the message of modernity rather than set free by the fictionalization of his possibilities. There is no room to soar upwards and pursue the divine quest of finding himself. The 'overman' is someone else. This sad and stymied 'ordinary guy' is not going anywhere. This is the pith of the sorry matter and with true psychological zeitgeist the pieces transcend intrinsic commonality through the monumental truth of angst. By confronting the locked position of this vision of man, the opposite is invoked - freedom and all of it's liberating facets.

The diminutive size and rough rendering points a way around the grand philosophical mysteries without having to be overwhelmed by the impossibility of understanding. The more likely fault - missing the mark



Untitled (Red Gauze) - 2008, Plaster, wood, paint, tape gauze, 61 x 8 x 9 inches



Untitled (Box Front) - 2008, Plaster, wood, paint, 12.5 x 5.5 x 6 inches

- loses the stigmata of ignorance. The potential for expressing the human condition has been realised in these unassuming figures. They pose no threat upon our need to stay at least somewhat comfortable within our sentience. In fact, they grant a reverse dignity to our common plight by vesting humility with a presence, a powerful sculptural identity.

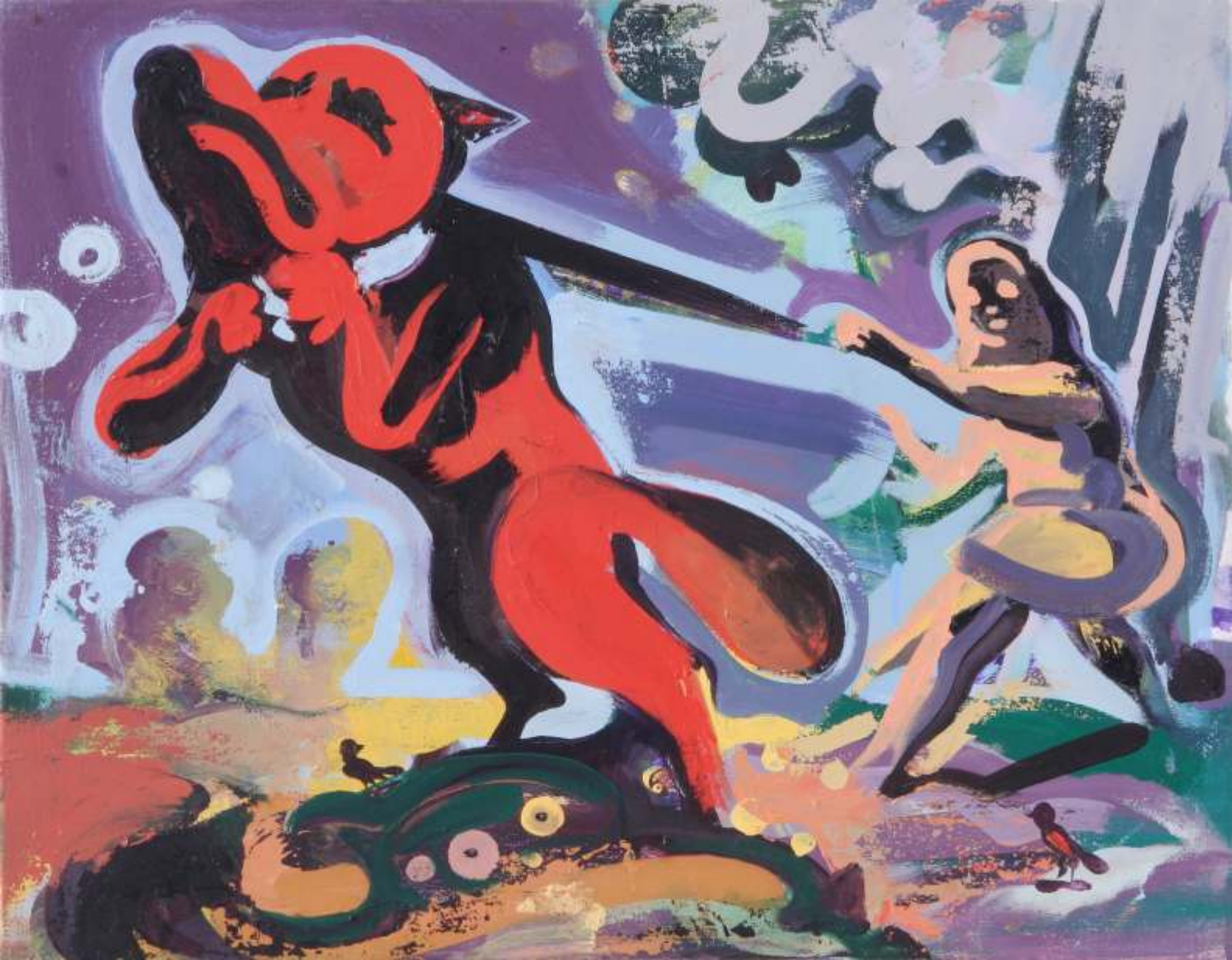
Ed Giordano's sculpture opens a door to compassion. It is void of arrogance and admits no challenge. It exists with a stubborn right to be blindly depressed. We feel sorry that it had gone this far, that the straight jacket has fused like a second skin, that we have not taken better care and been more attentive to this diminishing stature. It is his unflinching persistence that modernity is serving up less than it is capable of, that under-achievement is expected, that the weight of life is not equal to the potential for ascension that is first and foremost on his agenda. He is undauntingly pessimistic.

This is Ed's Fresh Pop - he insists the ingredients are toxic. His is not a bubbly intake but a draught with a bitter aftertaste.

RICH FOG



Micro Publishing
Toronto Canada



Billy Copley Ed Giordano Jr. **Jesse McCloskey**