

Monday, April 4, 2016

Tom Stanley - Slide Script Paintings

Terry Jarrard-Diamond Studio 24-7



Chain, Chain, Chain - Tom Stanley
acrylic and collage on canvas - 1992
13.75" x 21.74"

This past Saturday I had the wonderful experience of sitting with a circle of friends, collectors and artists to participate in *Coffee and Conversation* with [Tom Stanley](#) at the [Hampton III Gallery](#) in Taylors, SC. These gatherings are a tradition at the gallery and are hosted by gallery owner and director Sandy Rupp. Seated in the main room surrounded by the artwork, guests have the opportunity to interact with the featured artist.

Tom Stanley is well known in the Southeast and beyond. I thought I knew his work but I was delighted to see this never before exhibited group of paintings which presented new insights into his studio explorations.

The first works which caught my attention were from a series created in 1992 - 1993. Works featuring colorful animated figures, iconic shapes, and collage fragments floating in a field of black. *Chain, Chain, Chain* is from that series. The style of the work seems to reflect his love of "self-taught" artists work but the composition is flawless and speaks of an artist who is well versed in how to utilize space yet there is nothing self-conscious about that knowledge. Stanley has actually been a supporter of artists who work outside the framework of education even though he is by profession a teacher and art professional.



Holy Ghost - Tom Stanley
acrylic on canvas - 1992
26"

Stanley was very generous and shared many stories and insights about the elements contained within his painting. Often these elements find their way into the work through life experience and over time become an integral part of his art vocabulary. Some of the elements which were repeated were the profile (love the profile within a profile in *Holy Ghost*), ladders, steps, geometric forms and lots of mechanical drawing. He shared he was a mechanical engineer geek when in high school. Elegant mechanically drawn lines are key to some areas in work from the *Profile Across the River* series.



Profile Across the River #1 - Tom Stanley
acrylic on 300# arches - 2003-2005
30" x 22"

The mood and form of work from the *Profile Across the River* series really changes from the earlier work. The palette is more somber and more neutral. There is one large central figure supported by a few additional elements in front of an intense and richly textured background. These works were not my favorite on first look but as we talked about the development of the work and the story behind the works my feelings began to change. I mentioned earlier about the feeling of "self-taught" mixed with well trained elements in this work. These paintings showcase this combination of approaches beautifully. Each painting has one huge head balancing on precarious double wheels or on very fragile classical structures. Each head has what appears to be areas allowing the viewer to see through them into the "night sky". The pieces tell something of the story of how Stanley's grandfather lost his life.



Profiles en Route to Hamlet #2 - Tom Stanley
acrylic - 1998
22" x 30"

The third series of works from this exhibit is titled *Profiles en route to Hamlet* and I had a hard time selecting which piece to feature as I loved them all. Once again we have profiles floating in a dark endless world. There are slivers of a moon, a skinny ladder going to who knows where, giant plants and the ever present mechanical structures left for your interpretation. The imagery is developed using sgraffito on layers of acrylic. Every inch of the surface has the scratches of this very active technique which demands fast decisions and action. Despite what some might describe as an eerie atmosphere I found the work to be quiet, calm and peaceful.

I encourage you to visit Hampton III and see this fascinating show and be sure to pick up one of the show brochures. The brochure has a wonderful article on Stanley and his work written by Maria Clare Paulino, Associate Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Winthrop University where Stanley is chair of the art department. If you can't make it to the show be sure and visit the [Hampton III Gallery](#) website which has images of all work in the exhibition.