whitehot | February 2013: Andrew Schoultz @ Mark Moore Gallery


Andrew Schoultz, In Comparison to... (Gold Explosion), 2012. Acrylic, plaster, and gold leaf on stretched American flag over panel, 42 x 66 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Andrew Schoultz: Fall Out
Mark Moore Gallery, Culver City
January 12 to February 9, 2013

For his newest exhibition, Fall Out at Mark Moore Gallery, Andrew Schoultz has created a rich multi-dimensional, mixed media installation more like an environment -- a virtual public plaza -- for us to step inside. The centerpiece is a large cannon, Fall Out (2013, MDF, plaster and gold leaf) mounted on a platform, surrounded by four painted benches also fashioned by the artist. In military parlance "fall out" means to leave a parade or formation, and its use here is the show's theme-setter. By definition, the cannon makes a confrontational statement we can't ignore. On the walls, his riveting collage and mixed media paintings frame the surrounding space. For an artist who started out painting murals and street art as an offshoot of the skateboarding subculture, he has expanded far beyond a repertoire of two-dimensions.

Even Schoultz's paintings transcend the limitations of two-dimensional planes. On one wall, is a series of works on stretched American flags, which the artist uses both as a contextual frame of reference, as well as textured and patterned backgrounds for his compositions. In a presentation the night of the opening, Schoultz discussed his optimism for America in the months before President Obama was first elected. He ordered a shipment of U.S. flags to use as canvases, and on opening the package, was surprised to find they were made in China. His resulting works on flags reflect a mix of open-eyed patriotism, laced with a sense of irony.

One variation on the theme, In Comparison to... (Gold Explosion) (2012 Acrylic, plaster and gold leaf on stretched American flag over panel) features a burst of lavish gold leaf over plaster, like the physical, well, fallout, such as from an explosion. His work is not just rich with gold, even though that gold is just a veneer mirroring an era of economic instability. As in some of his previous paintings, a number of these more recent pieces incorporate actual currency as background, or cut up and collaged into the composition. The media for Storm Weatherer (2012) includes $2,500 in shredded U.S. currency as well as acrylic paint and gold leaf on canvas.
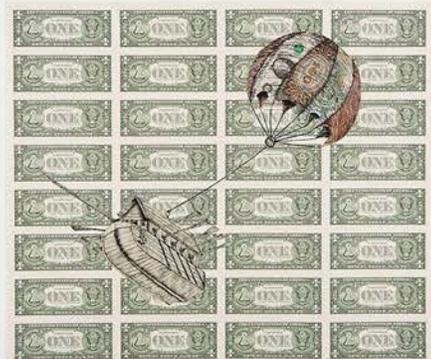
Andrew Schoultz, Ship in Flight, 2012. Acrylic and collage on uncut sheet of 2009 American currency, 21 x 25 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

What Schoultz has created is impressive on its aesthetic merit alone, but the most captivating part of his visual world is its resounding complexity and the underlying depth of meaning beneath the controlled, yet frenetic surface beauty. In a forthright way, the artist grapples with disturbing contemporary themes like modern warfare, U.S. imperialism, globalization, and environmental degradation. While these are serious concerns in his art, he integrates them in an elegant way, forcefully, but without being heavy-handed.

Simultaneously narrative and abstract, a sense of fantasy is conveyed through his iconography. Schoultz takes inspiration from 15th-Century German map-making and Indian miniature paintings. Delicately rendered warhorses, trees, classical ships, and pyramids borrowed from the back of the U.S. dollar bill are repeated elements in his images, contributing to an artistic arsenal that is both topical and ageless. From the very grand (as in his huge-scale outdoor murals and more recent embrace of sculptural installation) to the most finely detailed surface minutiae, Schoultz expresses his unique vision with masterful draftsmanship and eloquence.

Andrew Schoultz, Headless Pyramid (Gold Drip), 2012. Acrylic and Gold leaf on Stretched and dyed American flag over panel, 30 x 52 inches. Courtesy of the artist.
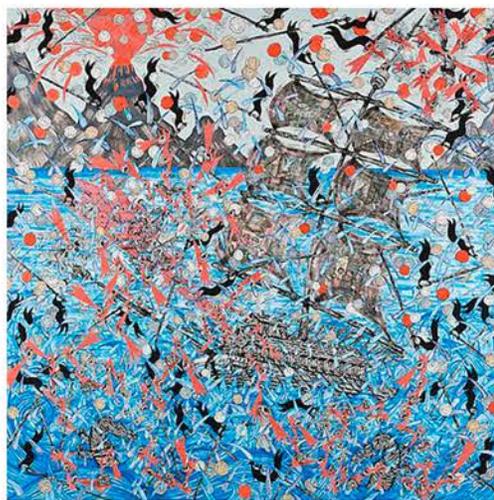
Andrew Schoultz, Flying Water (Horse), 2013. Acrylic and collage on panel, 72 x 48 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

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