Inside. Outside. Exhibit

Miller-Havens

Artist's Statement

Today professional sports are a significant part of our culture. They may even be a substitute for war, which so long dominated human affairs. Today, there are few places in the world where people dare to fight wars, out of fear of nuclear and biological weapons. Sports bring people together in competition that does not kill. The Olympics have been the only venue that unites the entire world in safe confrontation. These contemporary combats lend themselves to my goal of using art to remark publicly on the complexities of life and culture.

My painting is an emotional response to color, light, and human experience. From a very early age I found my reaction to the world around me divided between a fascination with the inner workings of the mind and the aesthetic beauty of nature. Pursuits of both these interests are reflected in my career as I moved back and forth between the two over time. My understanding of nature and human nature has come together in visual expression through painting. I set up for solution artistic problems that combine images and painting techniques from the past with the present, that define space through unexpected uses of color and line, that generate for the viewer a sense of psychological ambiguity and timelessness, that comment on human interaction.

Rather than painting men as idols or going to the other extreme of infantilizing or bashing them, I mean to portray male athletes not only as possessors of skill but as possessors of unique personalities vulnerable to all of life's demands. I want the viewer to experience the similarities between men and women. In sports and in life human beings hope for success, sometimes gain it, fail, pick themselves up, try again to be among the best and often strive to be part of a team.

By Inside. Outside. is meant, my representation of the figure has been informed not only by studio life drawing but by a knowledge of anatomy and psychology gained through careers in surgical and psychological fields. I place images in moments in time that are not easily orchestrated in a studio with live models; my portraits are not frontal. By not staring at subjects, not invading their space, much can be learned about individuals.

In the tradition of Degas,Tissot, and Eakins I photograph and study human interactions. When unable to obtain a pose I have in mind, I’m fortunate to have access to the slides of three well known sports photographers; Ponzini, Reibel, and Rydlewski. I then zerox various images in black and white, including enlarging or reducing sections of poses. This process removes color, volume and perspective, leaving only grey dotted outlines of the images. The remaining skeleton allows me the freedom to think about possible compositions. Then I can move on to the work of under-painting, sketching, arranging the images on the picture plane, and making color decisions. I represent light using both 16th century and 20th century techniques, either under-painting with glazes or applying pigment directly on the canvas. For example, I attempt to combine the techniques of Durer with those of Manet and to add my own inventions.

Cezanne said that he hoped to forge a link with the past. I am trying to do the same by combining painting techniques and understandings of human nature from the past with what I have come to perceive in the present.

www.millerhavens.com

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