



<http://chelseagallerista.blogspot.com>

SUNDAY, JANUARY 16, 2011

Matt Straub: "I'm Hit, But I Think I Can Make It" at Lyons Wier Gallery



There Ain't Time To Argue! Oil, spray paint, and enamel on canvas, 58 x 52 inches. This is my favorite. It's a huge work.



Video of Matt working in studio:
<http://vimeo.com/18850329>



Right now, it couldn't be more politically incorrect for me to "like" this exhibition. Congresswomen Gabrielle Gifford lies breathing through a tube somewhere in Tucson, recovering from a point-blank gunshot wound to the head. Pro and anti-gun squabbles are loud and vocal. So is psychoanalysis, as authorities try to work out how to spot nutjobs before they crack. So, it's with great trepidation that I even dare to blog about it - although the vivid poster-like images caught my eye sitting in Lyon's Weir gallery caught my eye long before the tragic incident.

Trouble Ahead, Oil, spray paint, and enamel on canvas, 22 x 22 inches, \$2500. I love the highly textured, thick blue thought bubble.



Hell Cat, Oil, spray paint, and enamel on canvas, 58 x 58 inches \$ 9,500

Matt Straub hails from Cheyenne, Wyoming, where he “spent his early years hitchhiking and hopping freight trains across the western states,” according to Lyons Weir press release. He now lives in Brooklyn, NYC, but ahhh, it’s comforting to think that the artist has a swaggering background to match the theme he paints. The press release goes on better than I can paraphrase:

Featuring classic Western iconographic images of cowboys, cowgirls, guns and horses, Straub’s paintings and collages depict the humorous and violent narratives and sentimental mythologies of the American West – a landscape defined by melancholy sunsets, badlands, gunfights, outlaws and red-blooded heroes. His references include Hollywood Westerns and the Comics and Pulp of the 1940’s-50’s.



A sample of Straub’s smaller series using cardboard mounted on wood. Acrylic, spray paint, enamel, Krink, cardboard mounted on wood panel 12 x 9 inches, \$ 800



Business for the Undertaker, 2010, Oil, spray paint and enamel on canvas, 52” x 54”

You could simplistically call this “Pop Art meets Western.” Lyons Wier defines it more significantly as “the period of transition between Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art.” I found it arresting (pardon the pun) and immediately wanted to hang “There Ain’t No Time to Argue!” on my wall. Most of these works are huge - which makes them larger than life, just like in the movies. From the big picture windows Lyons Wier Gallery’s corner spot on 7th Ave and 20th the images literally pounce on you and wrestle you to the ground.

But yes, I can’t help but look at these works and have the current events immediately spring to mind. The gun is such a cold, inanimate device, invented wholly and solely to kill people. It been romanticized by the arts (film, TV, comics) to the extent that it’s now officially make-believe - like a toy gun. I even teach a yoga pose I call the Charlie’s Angel Stretch because you hold your hands in a gun-like position. Every time I explain it to my students I fluff and fumble about for a better term, but that’s the one that spills from my lips. Have I finally become as ‘merican as a .22?



Matt with one of his smaller works on cardboard mounted on wood. What is the Indian saying? You know already, says Matt! \$600-\$800 each.



Only with an event like the recent shooting does it bring it all home - a gun is real, not a pair of clasped hands in a yoga pose; it's metal and menacing, not plastic and lego-blocks colored; it's heavy, not light; it's deadly, and not a mere ping of a rubber band.

For me these paintings do not glorify the gun and violence at all, but emphasize just how absurd the invention is, how man, desperately unable to use his words instead of violence to resolve his issues with fellow man, resorts to silencing his adversary once and for all. Is that what these wordless, black and bullet-ridden speech balloons are all about? When I asked Matt, he simply shrugged.

"We all know what they're saying. There's no need to spell it out."

Well, in case it's been a while since you saw "The Good, The Bad and the Ugly" or "Unforgiven", the titles spell it out for you, loud and clear.



Then Things Got Worse, Oil, spray paint, and enamel on canvas, 52 x 36 inches \$ 4,800 Deanne (left), gallery co-owner, and Matt Straub's wife (right)

Lyons Wier Gallery:
542 W. 24th St. Ground Floor
New York, NY 10011

www.lyonswiergallery.com