

TALK

ART TALK



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Should Art Schools Ignore the Art Market?

TUE JUL 31, 2012

Host: Edward Goldman

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Last Friday night, the Blue Building at the Pacific Design Center hosted the opening of the [exhibition](#) of the artworks by graduates of several Southern California art schools. The exhibition occupies the several showrooms on the second floor and it is open to the public through August 24th. The committee chose 90 MFA graduates and the resulting exhibition, as one might expect, is rather a mixed bag.



MFA graduates at the Pacific Design Center

I snapped a few pictures of the artworks that grabbed my attention. Surprisingly enough, the labels don't provide information about which school the artist graduated from.

Considering that Southern California is known for having the country's highest concentration of very good art schools, one wonders why the school names are not proudly displayed. As a sort of revenge, I am omitting the names of the artists while showing their works on our website.



MFA graduates at the Pacific Design Center

I liked the installation made up of dozens of bright red pillows plastered on the walls. Next to it was a small dark room with a video of a seriously overweight, naked woman happily rolling on the floor and singing. Then came a tiny sculpture of a burning house suspended from the ceiling, and trailed by a long dramatic plume of smoke that extended through the length of the gallery. I also stared into the void behind the open door, with multiple

lights shining at me, trying to decide what would happen if I dared to enter. Do I see the light at the end of the tunnel ...or... is it the light of an approaching train?



MFA graduates at the Pacific Design Center

However, the majority of the artwork came across as, if I may say so, seriously under cooked. God help these young artists as they enter into the real world, and try to support themselves. There was not a trace of figurative painting or sculpture among the artworks, which is not a surprise considering that such work is thought of as completely outdated, totally out of fashion, and mostly ignored by art schools.



MFA graduates at the Pacific Design Center

Just think for a moment about the never-ending demand for portraits of people in positions of power: presidents, chiefs of industry, celebrities of all kinds, and then the whole army of well-to-do people with their spouses and kids. From the time of the Pharaohs to the gilded era of American robber barons, the best artists were selected by those in power to make their portraits. Today's list of good painters or sculptors involved in the art of portraiture is extremely short. As a result, corporate boardrooms, civic plazas and even [presidential palaces](#) are filled with banal, and sometimes embarrassingly inept likenesses of people who deserve better.





(L)Equestrian portrait of John Wayne in Los Angeles.

(R)Portraits of the the King and Queen of Spain in the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid

Want to see a good example of such bad art? Stop at the corner of La Cienega and Wilshire in Los Angeles and look at the bronze equestrian statue of John Wayne and his poor horse, both of them looking half-dead. The Duke deserves better than that. Or look at the insipid portraits of the King and Queen of Spain hanging in the lobby of the famous Thyssen-Bornemisza private art museum in Madrid.

If art schools would be smart and practical enough to give reasonable attention to the art of portraiture, then some talented students might choose it as their career path. As a result, a healthy portion of the market would be taken away from bad and mediocre craftsmen.



Nikolai V. Tomsky, Portrait Bust of Dr. Hammer, 1982-83, bronze, the Armand Hammer Collection

Imagine visiting major museums founded by private collectors, such as the Hammer and the Getty, and seeing commissioned portraits of their namesakes done by the best of contemporary artists. Instead, visitors are greeted by a "paint-by-numbers" likeness of these strong, complicated, and larger than life businessmen who, in my opinion, deserve better.

The Southern California MFA Invitational is on display at the Pacific Design Center through August 24th.

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lynn · 13 hours ago

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it's over!...relevant art is about innovation and that no longer exists...it seems to have "run its course"...

too many people going to art school, to do something that "looks like fun"...

an artist must be born to be an artist...


it's all been done before!...sorry!

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Classic Portraiture is so last century!

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