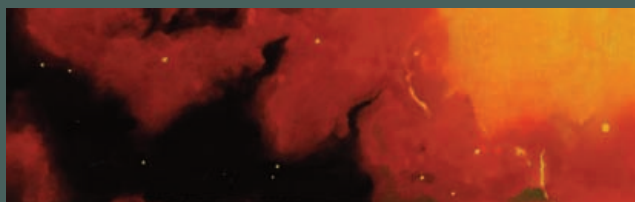


Norman Grandstaff

paintings



Memories,



Dreams,



Reflections,



and Meditations

—two styles

mind, explore their own thoughts, and come away relaxed."

Grandstaff refers to his second style as his "rough paintings."

"These works in large part look back to my days growing up in the South Bronx, where we used junk and a hefty amount of imagination to create our own toys and clubhouses," Grandstaff says. "If you want to search for influences, think of the Our Gang comedies."

The paintings also show the strong influence of Jasper Johns, who relied on encaustic wax to create texture in his works, and Robert Rauschenberg, who incorporated found objects into his paintings.

Unlike the "lacquer paintings," Grandstaff's "rough paintings" are rich in pronounced imagery and deeply narrative in nature. "Often when I collect things a story begins to emerge," he says. "The paintings are like plays. All the parts are on a 'stage' and tell a story, or at least suggest one."

The stories are largely autobiographical, but Grandstaff invites viewers to create their own narratives and not dwell on his. For that reason, he keeps the detailed meaning of the imagery in the paintings for the most part to himself. "I don't want to ruin a chance for the viewer to come to a piece and bring their life's history to it," he says. "I want them to connect their own dots, not mine. The work is meant to be 'child's play.' The paintings have a carnival feel to them, or perhaps the feel of a fun house. If they engage and entertain the viewer, then I've achieved what I intended."

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Washington, DC-based painter

Norman Grandstaff works in two distinct styles.

One he refers to as his “lacquer paintings.” These peaceful, sensuous works are inspired by the many hours the artist has spent meditating, as well as by the works of color-field painters like Mark Rothko and Grandstaff’s personal interest in lacquer-painted furniture from Asia. “You can lose yourself for hours in the worn, scraped or partly missing painted areas on these pieces of furniture,” says Grandstaff. “They are all, in a way, magnificent paintings.”

It took the artist more than three years of research, experimentation and practice to learn how to control the reaction that takes place between oil paints and lacquer. Each of Grandstaff’s paintings in this style has from 30 to 60 layers. Sometimes the layers alternate between oil paint and lacquer; and sometimes five or six layers of lacquer are applied in succession, to create greater depth in the surface.

The painter also sandpapers some layers in order to expose earlier ones. “Just like with the Asian furniture, where time and use have worn the newer to expose the older layers, sometimes the ‘painting’ is actually the result of removal,” says Grandstaff. “Sometimes a color can only be gotten by sanding, instead of painting more on top.”

The works in this series require an extraordinarily long time to complete, due to the length of time required for each layer of oil paint to dry. Applying lacquer on top of oil paint that has not thoroughly dried will cause the under-layers to curdle. “I have done this intentionally a few times when I wanted to achieve a more textured surface,” Grandstaff says.

“Each time a viewer comes to one of these paintings, my hope is that they’ll lose their sense of time a little,” the artist says. “By staring into the layers, the viewer can get a sense of enlarged space, shift to a more tranquil state of



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