

Small Pieces Paintings, Chromatic Horizon, and The Small Paintings at Mondo Cane Gallery, December, 2005.

The big painting (Chromatic Horizon) was made in July and August of this year (2005) and was intended, in style, technique, and subject matter, to act as a bridge between two series: The Small Pieces Paintings (2003) and The Monochromatic Series (begun in April, 2005).

Actually, I had been thinking about making a huge horizontal painting for Mondo Cane since my last show (Dec. 2004), but I had no idea how to proceed. Then, for the first half of this summer, I worked on the monochromatic paintings. I took a break from the studio in late June and went out West for a few weeks, and when I returned I had some new ideas about making the big painting. I came to understand that I wanted to make a painting using the juxtaposed warm and cool, opaque and transparent colors of The Small Pieces Paintings combined with the tight cluster of circular pours, and use of negative space as a compositional element, which I employed in The Monochromatic Series. I felt that if I could get these two styles to blend harmoniously in one large painting, I'd be creating a bridge between the series I was passionate about now, and the series I'd be exhibiting in the fall. I contacted Greg and Patrick (of Mondo Cane) and let them know what I had in mind. They liked the idea, and I went to work.

The planning and logistics for Chromatic Horizon took almost the entire month of July. I'd need fifteen 4' x 4' pre-stretched canvases, thirty gallons of acrylic gloss medium, lots of raw pigment and acrylic inks, and it would all have to be shipped to my studio in New Hampshire. Sounds easy enough, but these materials, especially the gloss medium and acrylic ink, are typically produced and sold only in small quantities, so everything had to be special ordered.

Then, once everything did arrive in my studio, I spent a week hand-mixing the thirty gallons of medium to create 17 colors. When everything was prepared, I poured out test samples, but after four days of drying, I realized that five of the colors were far too dark and would have to be remixed. I spent the next couple of days in the metro Boston area driving from one art supply store to another until I finally gathered the ten gallons of medium that I needed to finish the job.

Finally, during the second week of August, I was ready to work, and over the course of a single day, I poured out the first half of the painting (8 panels) in one continuous, 12 hour session. The canvases were laid out edge to edge over six tables, and although my studio in New Hampshire is big, just this first half of the painting took up the whole space.

The physical demands of making this painting were also intense. After 12 hours of continuous work, I was barely able to stand or lift my arms, but the first half of the painting was done. Now all I had to do was rest up and let the painting dry enough to be

disassembled and moved. This process took about 10 days.

To my surprise, the second half of the painting went much quicker (about 8 hours) and seemed much less physically demanding. But the technical aspect of laying out my colors was much more difficult: I only had so much medium to work with, and no more could be mixed. And although I kept a record of the sequence in which I had laid down the colors, how much of each color I used varied. This meant that for the second half of the painting to be the same as the first, I had to do everything exactly the same way, and not run out, or use too little, of any color.

In the end I think it all worked out. But I'll leave that, of course, for the viewer.

In this exhibition, the viewer can also check out the Small Pieces Series, and, hopefully, the connection between it and Chromatic Horizon will be self-evident. The Monochromatic Series is not represented here, but with any luck, it will continue to grow and, hopefully, will be exhibited next year.

Finally, The Small Paintings--these paintings were made in September and are based almost entirely on close-up views of Chromatic Horizon. In other words, after studying Chromatic Horizon, I isolated small areas which interested me and blew them up. The idea was to then take these close-up compositions and execute them on very small canvases (12" x 12", 10" x 10", 6" x 6"). Most of the medium used in this series was left over from Chromatic Horizon, with a few new colors added.

In the end, I hope the viewer feels some of the excitement that I felt when making these paintings. I've also included a short essay that discusses what I'm attempting to do as a painter in a more general way.

Jim Oliveira
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