



Walking in the Path of Ideas

SURFACE TREATMENT

With COVID-19 rebounding and slowing gallery openings, we are keeping your art experiences alive by looking back at some memorable shows. Today we revisit Jeff Medina's solo exhibition at UTPA in 2008.

Portraits of Thoughts

The artist wants the viewer to participate with his paintings by connecting their conceptually transparent layers.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

Jeff Medina's paintings contain their own life force. His exhibition, "Portraits of Thoughts", on display at UTPA's University Gallery, offer viewers a satisfying inward journey through his controlled technique and counterpoint composition of layers. Medina describes his works as paintings of thoughts; at first glance, the paintings appear to be totally abstract and devoid of associative object or figure, but subtle figures appear on closer observation. He is offering an interpretation of the formation of thought and the impression of image with canvases that are often hauntingly beautiful. Medina demonstrates a masterful control of tonal and restrained chromatic contrasts.

"Walking in the Path of Ideas", demonstrates Medina's concept of thoughts surrounding us. Four formative figures are suggested. Acorn shaped "heads" seem almost radioactive with their bright orange to yellow gradient, their bodies existing in another chromatic dimension. Neutralized orange and yellows are perceived as dropping back into space, denying the picture plane its flatness through softened contrasts. Medina's color gradients are meant to represent enlightened thought; his unconnected figures also suggest futuristic electrical formulations.

These works that depict people standing, walking, interacting, or simply posing, are created from tonal changes and a framework that allows us to see through the outlines.

The colors behind are meant to represent ideas and sometimes identify the figures. The framework occurs like a jumble of Chinese writing gone wrong; the sensory ambiance registers somewhere between a Byzantine spirituality and a comic narrative from space. The combination results in a rich visual experience.

What really interests this artist is what lies behind the figures. Medina has achieved the illusion of transparent layers without physical transparency, embracing an open space system that is more often found in sculpture. His sensitive treatment of the open spaces in the framework forms the suggestion of transparency without sacrificing the paint-filled opaque shape that defines it. Faces full of bold color represent people in a conventional state of mind. Deeper into Medina's reality, circling spheres represent ideas and inspirations that surround us. The painting, "Full Circle but not a Conclusion", expresses the complexity of a thought process; lines radiating in all directions attempt to emphasize the dynamics of thought attempting resolution.

"One of the things I try to focus on is the world of ideas," said Medina. "I try to raise as many features of our reality as possible. I try to keep a search for ideas and enlightenment, representing it with color. So even though there are many layers of possible thoughts, there are few that really pop out."

Beginning his painting efforts in Mexico years ago, the artist increasingly became concerned with the meaning of his work. "If I wanted to pursue a more direct illustration of ideas," posited Medina, "they would become illustrations, not paintings; I try to separate illustration from painting. That way viewers can interpret in their own way instead of my giving them everything all at once." He also does computer graphic work, which may explain his smoothly painted surfaces, but considers it separate from his painting. "I'm more into the traditional form of art, working hours on the canvas, thinking and redoing," he added.

Medina searches for ideas and thoughts floating around us all the time and tries to capture some of them in their yet to be realized state. He summarized his search by adding, "Some People see them, some people don't."

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