

The Columbus Dispatch

Entertainment & Life

In Columbus Museum of Art exhibit, New York artist invites intrigue, engagement



"In This Lifetime"



"On Earth"

By Peter Tonguette / For The Columbus Dispatch

Posted Aug 4, 2019 at 4:01 PM

Updated Aug 4, 2019 at 9:54 PM



Call it participatory artwork.

When viewing the mixed-media creations of New York artist Jim Hodges, art lovers are invited to use their imaginations. Figures or forms are not always easy to discern, and the meaning behind it all is seldom spelled out.

Hodges — whose work has been featured at major institutions throughout the U.S. and around the globe — is the subject of a stellar solo show currently on view at the Pizzuti Collection of the Columbus Museum of Art.

Taking up two floors at the contemporary arts center, the exhibit more than once makes viewers part of the art.

Two thought-provoking pieces on display make use of reflective glass. In “On Earth,” a 40-by-60-inch mirror is broken up into tiny shards. Visitors who encounter the work can glimpse fragmented reflections of themselves in the slivers.

Perhaps the fractured mirror — as well as its title, a reference to the phrase “On Earth as it is in heaven” in the Lord’s Prayer — is meant to invite contemplation about the imperfect state of humanity.

Equally provocative is the two-piece work “Untitled (Shadow Red/Black),” which occupies a corner in a gallery room. With one side consisting of crimson-colored glass, and the other, dark-hued glass, the

piece suggests a window into the underworld.

Other works appear to be intentionally incomplete, as if the artist wishes viewers to finish the picture.

In the screenprint “Untitled (For Creative Time),” a piece of white paper is cut in patterns that show a colorful collage underneath; to some viewers, the shapes of the cut-outs suggest birds in flight — a wing here, a beak there — but nowhere is avian life explicitly referenced.

Equally ambiguous is the “Arena” series, which repurposes work intended for other pieces. For example, “Arena III (How Do We Know)” presents an entirely blank surface except for a small photograph of a door in the upper left-hand corner. Similarly, “Arena II (Given a Shaft of Sunlight)” offers what look like tentative sketches of cloud formations.

Other works paint bolder pictures, including “In this Lifetime,” which, at first glance, looks to be an unremarkable photograph of a giant tree on a hillside on a bright, sunny day. On closer examination, though, it becomes obvious that the leaves on the tree have been snipped and re-adhered to the image, giving it a striking three-dimensional element.

The exhibit has its share of colorful works, including “I Love You,” showing 12 overlapping pieces of pastel-colored tissue paper; and “Your Song When You’re Not Here,” offering an upside-down image of a green forest onto which squiggly gold lines have been added, suggesting a spider’s web.

Yet the single most imposing work in the show is a study in the monochromatic: The cotton-and-polyester piece “End of Time (Dark Gray)” presents what appears to be an elaborate floral pattern that is washed in dark gray, evoking images of some apocalyptic, soot-filled future.

Hodges’ works ask much of those who view them — but those who enter the exhibit with open minds will be rewarded.

tonguetteauthor2@aol.com
