

Art for Art's Sake

Selections from the Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation

Curated By Billie Milam Weisman

December 11, 2016 - February 19, 2017

Exhibition Hours:

- Thursday - Saturday from 10:00am - 5:00pm
- Sunday from 1:00pm - 5:00pm
- closed holidays

The Carnegie Art Museum

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...abstract art--far from speaking to those things that unite us, to what we all have in common-- is generated precisely from giving the greatest vent to those things that make us individually different and separate from each other. And it is by this very process that it re-energizes our shared culture.

—Kirk Varnedoe, Pictures of Nothing

This exhibition explores the potentials of abstraction. It features over forty, mainly young American artists that expand upon the conventions of modern art to create lush works revealing an interest in subjective, transcendental and visionary experiences.

The title, **Art for Art's Sake**, originates from an idea that was first addressed by French Romantics in the 1830s and became the rallying cry for the English Aesthetic movement of the late 19th century. Proponents, such as James McNeill Whistler, believed that art should avoid secondary goals, such as narrative, and focus foremost on visual beauty. This idea that art must emphasize pure pictorial qualities led a few decades later in the early 20th century to the rise of abstract painting. Since then, abstract paintings and sculptures have been produced in many variant styles ranging from Expressionism to Minimalism.

Using the basic elements of pictorial art -- color, line, shape, texture – the artists in this exhibition delve into and advance contemporary abstraction by producing bold, exuberant compositions that appeal first to the eye. Most of the work was produced in the last 20 years, a cultural era dominated by the labyrinth of images on the Internet. In order to compete with this continual barrage of pictorial stimulation, these artists chose to tackle it head-on, incorporating unaccustomed media and creating works that confront the viewer with a complex field of visual information.

Always surprising, their art is complicated, convoluted, opulent and suggestive of experiences beyond our ordinary limits. Los Angeles artist Brian Porray, for instance, creates a "techno-futuristic" image in (*DARKHORSE*) reflecting his interest in scientific systems and altered states of consciousness. Former microbiologist Kelsey Brookes of San Diego melds cognitive science and art to create intense paintings of abstracted molecules and hallucinogenic states heightening the sensory perceptions and reactions of viewers.

Based in Long Beach, Ali Smith applies paint almost sculpturally and addresses a consistent theme of contradiction / paradox. Bulgarian artist Iva Gueorgieva residing in Los Angeles creates seemingly chaotic paintings that actually have a strong sonic structure.

While aesthetically distinctive, the artists of **Art for Art's Sake** share using both objective systems and subjective feelings to construct art that celebrates the pure visual effect of sumptuous beauty.

