

the Repellent Addictive series

The paintings in this exhibition are part of a group of works titled "Repellent Addictive". The phrase is borrowed from Don DeLillo's novel Underworld where it is used to describe the absurd attraction of shows like "Cops", "Wife Swap" or any of the other "reality" shows. I am using the phrase to describe my own conflicted ideas about life in the USA.

I try to create images that seduce with nostalgia while simultaneously embodying an underlying sense of dread. I'm interested in crystallized moments of boredom and anticipation, silence and slow decay, numbing stasis and electrical hum. I find inspiration in outdated American, cold war era advertising and educational illustration styles and the hollow fiction of the American Dream that they connote.

Working from both found images and my own photographs, elements are edited, enhanced and sometimes combined. I work within imposed visual constraints in order to further simplify the resulting painting; at times pushing the image toward abstraction. The subject is often isolated and contextualizing details are stripped away. The majority of them are roughly "sofa-sized" (2x4 ft.). The colors are flat and muted. The tonal range gravitates toward a middle gray. I try to paint clinically and with a fair amount of detachment.

The overall look of the paintings is actually a return to the sort of images I was creating 20 years ago while studying printmaking, when I was concentrating on screenprinting and heavily drawn to pop imagery. The new works look very much like screenprints and often do contain stencilled elements, but (with the exception of the Smokerise Circle houses) they are unique pieces. In more recent works (such as the NYC blizzard paintings) the manner of paint application is actually closer in method to the process used in creating a mezzotint.

Any melancholic overtones are fully intentional.

Michael McKay 10/08

further information/contact:

www.emptysetprojects.com

email: emptyset@taconic.net

empty set project space 150 South St Pittsfield Ma 01201

(518) 781-3899