



Autzen Gallery | Portland State University Art Department
Autzen Gallery | 2nd Floor PSU Neuberger Hall | Room 205 | 724 SW Harrison | PDX, OR
Gallery Hours: Monday-Friday 10-5 or by appointment: rockp@pdx.edu

Paintings of the Vernacular + Flash

Brendan Lott, LA, CA

Monday, February 1, 2010 – Friday, February 26, 2010
Artist Reception & Gallery Talk: Monday, February 1, 2010 | 4-6 p.m.
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Statement:

If someone asked me, “What’s your problem?” I’d have to say, “Skin.” - Andy Warhol

If I could write a dictionary I’d want to make all the strong words so broadly defined that they would lose all practical meaning outside of a specific context. I’d like negatives like stupid and ugly to become more positive and words like brilliant and beautiful to become more negative so that they would meet somewhere in the middle. These words would then become simply descriptive without carrying any sense of judgment, like shiny or rectangular. I think then the language would become really free. People could say whatever they thought without worrying about hurting anybody’s feelings. People could really describe their own personal state of affairs clearly and without shame.

Jokes are important. For example, I’m fascinated with how three things are funny and four are not. This is why a priest, a minister and a rabbi go into a bar and leave the pastor at home. It’s the structure that makes it funny. Some people can tell jokes and some can’t. I am also really interested in how ham is a funnier lunchmeat than turkey. A ham sandwich is special in a way that no other sandwich is. Note that Mama Cass is said to have died choking on a ham sandwich, and not some other kind. That story wouldn’t have the staying power it does if the sandwich were different. There is a certain kind of pathos to ham. Pathos is important. Ham is somehow a little object when corned beef is not. Like ham has no business killing anybody so when it does, it’s extra notable.

"Artists of every postwar generation concur that to accept without question the seemingly self-explanatory quality of everyday life in America is to be duped by entertainment, advertising and political spectacle into dwelling thoughtlessly in a world of engineered illusions." -Kenneth Baker

If this is true, then the artists of all postwar generations have really been missing out on the good stuff. American culture is fundamentally about these engineered illusions. To ignore this or position yourself above or aside it is really to take yourself away from American culture. I want to be an artist that is fully implicated in the culture. I want to be duped.

What happens today is the most important thing. What happened yesterday or last year or last century is really just an abstraction and should be forgotten about. It is just as unknowable as what will happen tomorrow. To try to overcome this is futile. I just go with it. For example, this text has more to do with the two or three books I am reading right now, the music I'm listening to or how people treated me today than all my past experiences put together. It's not like they don't matter, but they really can't stand up to right now.

“All the good ideas have already been thought about,” people say. They mean that this is a bad thing. But I love it. It is comforting. It really takes the pressure off of me. All these pre-thought ideas are useful, and they usually still have some good left in them, especially when applied in a different context.

Art is not special. Therefore neither are artists. An artist is simply someone who happens to professionalize an activity that everybody else does automatically. To choose the color and texture and size and style of your couch is an artistic gesture equal to one of Pollock’s drips or Judd’s shelves. The only difference is the couch chooser is simply doing it, whereas Pollock and Judd are making a big production of it. This doesn’t mean art isn’t important. It clearly is. Like making the right choice for couch color is important. Many people express themselves beautifully by doing nothing other than selecting clothes that they will wear that day. Is this any less valid than Duchamp selecting a snow shovel? The difference is that Duchamp gets in the canon and everybody else just looks great at parties. I’m not sure which is more important.

*Brendan Lott is represented by: Baer Ridgway Exhibitions in San Francisco, California and the work in this exhibition appears courteously of the gallery and the artist.