

Fall Preview – September 9, 2010

Nicola Parente's Acoustic Vision at the Speed of Light by Stacey Holzer

Out of observation to the larger continuum a connection to all things results from the visual acuity required to see at the speed of light. Movement and the essence of living inspires the paintings of Nicola Parente. In one word "Connection" is what drives Parente to paint. Authentically driven by a reciprocity of living, the flow of Parente's paintings are derived from a relevance to their surrounding environment. Intentionally concerned with movement and re-gentrification of the urban landscape, his paintings reflect how time passes swiftly like a rolling film projector or travelling by train seeing the landscape move in record space. As the viewer your own movement changes your point of attraction and can become a blur.

The Edge of Urban Time was a series that focused on re-gentrified urban areas throughout the country and the wards of Houston. Fences constructed around sites being redeveloped, people relocated in the name of urban renewal, these facts shape the landscapes of reality and his work. Monochromatic dark tones, and crosshatch transparent grids portray a glimpse of an urban jungle magnified, a hint of red is used to depict a human element. A concrete jungle remade into an urban playground. Development yields positive change yet a second look reveals the element of displacement that also occurs.

"There is meaning in every journey that is unknown to the traveler". Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This quote sets the stage for Parente's *Journey* series. This body of work tears down barriers of the previous exploration of urban re-gentrification and reexamines the beautification of urban space. The development of Discovery Green with art, trees, and lakes was an influence. Layers of color, architectonic details, a fascination with trains and travel to Italy each year are also provocative sensations that evolve Parente's work.

Each series organically progresses and changes within a time frame of about two years. As time passes Parente yields to an inner knowing that facilitates the entrance of a new beginning. Henry David Thoreau wrote "Only that day dawns to which we are awake" a phrase that most represents Parente's latest work *The Edge of Awakening*.

Acceleration of time is a phrase you hear often in our world of ever changing complexities and it comes with a desire to return to self, redefining what is important. For Parente becoming a full time artist was a way of doing just that. Imagining what his father would experience as a farmer in Italy, returning to the land as sustenance over and again. Although Nicola retains an urban aesthetic the return to authenticity is similar in feel and imagining, the results are completely of his own design.

As a contemporary artist using twenty-first century materials Parente utilizes a method of subtraction, working wet on wet, charcoal powders are reduced with brushes that reunite them. He researched various plastics at length to determine which surface would best prove ground for the images he creates. Parente says "a successful painting must create an emotional response not a positive or negative one but an echo strong enough to remember".

The creative process is stepping into a place of allowance where you are willing to be vulnerable enough to let go and allow creative expression to flow through you. Time disappearance happens when you become one with what you create. Remaining present enough to let go without much thought generates the most successful result. Parente says "Painting is a meditation remembering and resonance allow oneness with what you are doing. Losing yourself in the moment is fantastic, a transitional state of pure creativity".

Parente is currently working as one of the visiting visual artists for Writers in the Schools program (WITS). Since 2009 he has worked with over 800 students, elementary through middle school. Parente is paired with one of WITS' teaching poets to create deep arts-infused learning experiences. Students work closely with a writer/poet to create self-reflective writings of their own. Parente then guides the students in transforming their own writing into a visual art component.

Parente's most recent project was in conjunction with the Joaquín Torres-García exhibition at the Menil Collection. Students toured the collection, worked with a poet, and then created their own wood or cardboard abstraction generating symbols and writing to tell their story of arrival. Parente says "It was powerful work. I was amazed at how deep the students dug to create their poems and how high they flew to create their artwork. Seeing the immense results from this kind of collaborative work, inspires me, I now believe that the arts feed one another in unexplainable ways". Many of the kids involved in the program have little or no exposure to museums or galleries. A strong belief in giving back to the community sparked Parente's involvement in this worthy program.

Authenticity and the caring spirit of inclusiveness are what define the expression of Nicola Parente. As his work continues to evolve it will be wonderful to see what is yet to unfold. Nicola Parente's solo exhibition *Edge of Awakening* is now on view at Gremillion & Co. Fine Art through October 9th 2010.