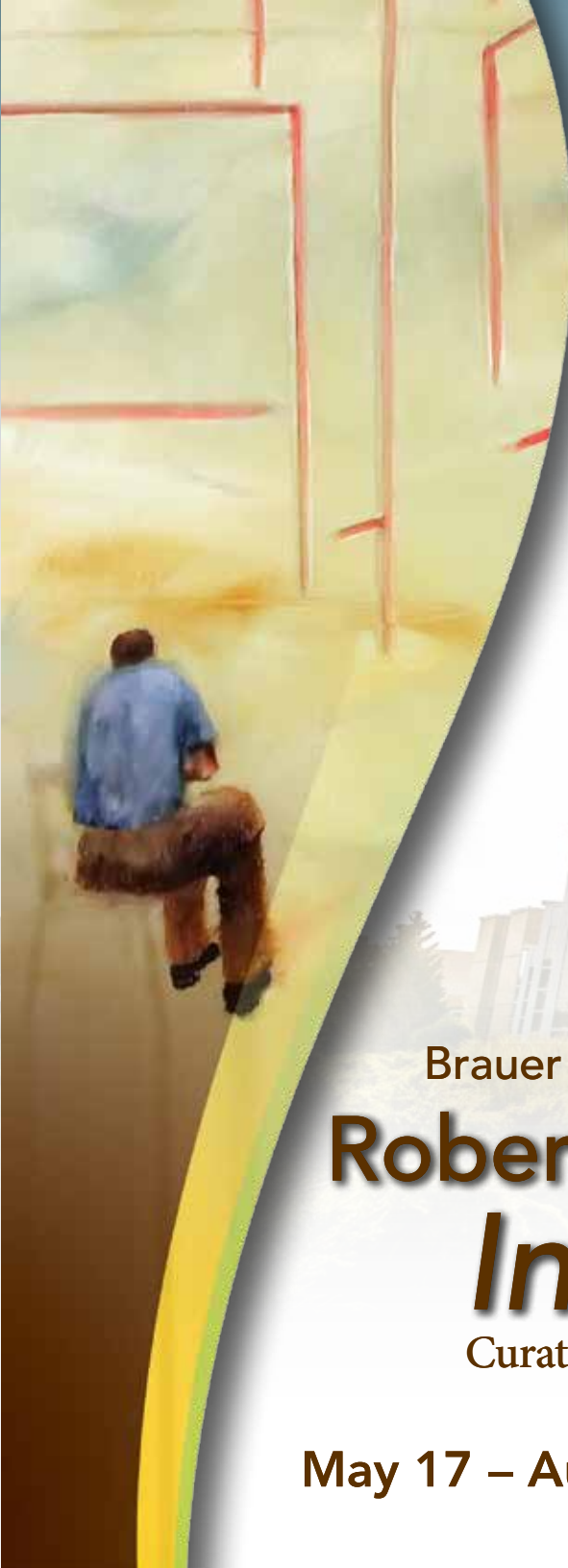




VALPARAISO
UNIVERSITY

THE ARTS



Brauer Museum of Art

Robert Stanley
In Focus

Curated by Gregg Hertzlieb

May 17 – August 11, 2013



Curator's Statement

It is a pleasure for me to present *In Focus*, a survey of the art of Robert Stanley (b. 1942). I enjoyed curating this exhibition because it gave me the opportunity to look at, to focus on, a great deal of Stanley's work in all media, from all periods. While I thought initially that I had a good overall sense of his dominant styles and themes, I learned a lot and appreciated seeing how earlier creations, earlier approaches, evolved into the style today for which he is best known.

An artist and educator living in Beverly Shores, Ind., Stanley has displayed his work in numerous exhibitions nationally and internationally. His interests range from traditional art-making media to the digital realm, and he freely mixes media according to where his subjects and ideas take him. Stanley is an artist for whom aesthetics, representation, and perception themselves are subjects, and his work challenges expectations and attitudes in the same way that he does personally in discussions about his art, and about art in general. Titles, images, and ways of applying pigment all engage in conversation, where meaning emerges from the complex interplay of elements. Even seemingly straightforward figurative pieces or nonobjective formal creations have personal narratives at their heart that reflect ponderings about the reasons or motivations for their making, as well as about their reception in the world.

I have known Stanley well personally for quite a few years, and when we decided to show his work at the Brauer (an idea, by the way, that came out of my visit a while back to Stanley's studio to see his latest pieces), I knew I wanted to use the occasion for careful examination and selection so that I could really internalize or feel the work, and Stanley could see this interpretation happen. He has always struck me as an artist who valued seeing people view his art and hearing from those people the ideas they had, the associations and connections that arose from their viewing. I was hoping that my selections would create an entity that Stanley and I, and others could then observe and perhaps savor, a creation from creations that could spawn creative ideas and responses. I believe that any person curating a show of Stanley's art would choose entirely different objects than those that I chose; such an individuality of perspective would please the artist whose ongoing goal seems to be to awaken viewers to the mysteries and beauties that surround them when they see with both their eyes and minds.

Cover (detail) and below: *Senses*, 2008, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 inches



Behind every work of art by Robert Stanley is the artist immersed in his own, to use the artist's own term, "system." Stanley's system is to treat the world, the universe, existence, as an arena or field — and drifting through that field is a gesture or an object or a mark that is both a symbol of a thing and the thing itself; art captures through likeness and metaphor, and the elasticity of these terms and concepts enables the formation of additional arenas. Things shift and change, and as that happens you comment to that effect to the artist beside you, who has been there all along. And you realize that seeing together and talking together become a crucial meaning of the work. You are comforted because Stanley cares, and you realize that such a reassurance is what you needed the most because now you feel like you can care, and it feels nice. It's fun. It's an adventure.

— Gregg Hertzlieb, Director/Curator
Brauer Museum of Art, Valparaiso University

Robert Stanley *In Focus*

Having a good curator look at your work is like being in front of a talking mirror. I want to know how people respond to my art. I try to balance the tension between self-expression and the needs and expectations of others. So, seeing the artworks as others see them shakes me out of my world and leads past comfort to new adventures. Because of his wide experience and deep humanity, Gregg Hertzlieb's choices for this exhibition are very valuable, like gazing into that talking mirror.

With his choices of earlier works and noticing my use of "system," Hertzlieb mirrored to me three things: one giving me a positive feeling, another creating a disturbing question, and the third sharing a mystery. First, on the upbeat side, by his picking *City #2*, the earliest piece in the exhibition, I saw that my artworks had grown whole from an early seed. *City #2*, with its free and exuberant slashing strokes limited by a grid-like order, was, unknown to me, an attempt at tensioned balance between chaos and order. I still am working through a possible balance between chaos and order.

In the second instance, however, I was disturbed that mirrored back to me was my use of the word "system." Such a hard, intellectualized word. Had I overemphasized "system?" I still don't know. It is true that each of us has a worldview into which everything must somehow fit. Was I too much like the Greek mythological host, Procrustes, who bragged that he had a bed to fit any guest, and then when the guest lay down stretched him on the rack or cut off some leg to make him fit? Wouldn't that be strange, since I felt my work was trying to do the opposite, to check out a worldview in a bigger frame? I am still disturbed; that is good. The curator has shown the artist something that causes him to expand.

The third mirrored thing remains with me also. How do all these works fit together? That will be fertile ground, most likely unconsciously, for quite a while.

So, I work at making art. Why? Some of it is because I just love using colors, shapes, strokes, and making them work in concert, somewhat like the joy of cooking a great dinner. Also, there is a tradition in art that sees artists as a stimulus to living. Confucius held that artists had much more time to look and think than did most of the people who were farming, raising a family, counting beans . . . The artist should "distill" what he saw and present it beautifully, so that people could take it in during the short times they had to look at art. In Western tradition, from the Renaissance artists to Marshall McLuhan seeing artists as "the antennae of the race," the artist served not only for the pleasure of the eyes but also as a rejuvenator.

Some artists show much emotion, others criticize, still others show fear. Think of Picasso, Grosz, and Munch. I show amazement. I am amazed at people, society, science, and nature — and how we try to make something of them.

Here's what I like: holding up a mirror to the world, showing colors melding and yet standing out, bringing events, shapes, emotions, paint, and other things somehow together in an unforeseen way.

— Robert Stanley, Artist



Bathers at the River, 2010, oil and ink on canvas, 40 x 48 inches

Robert Stanley: *In Focus* Exhibition Checklist

Unless otherwise noted, all works are Collection of the Artist.

- 1) *City #2*, 1962, printing ink on paper, 15 x 23 inches
- 2) *Cheerful*, 1966, enamel on board, 24 x 14 inches
- 3) *Blue Figure*, 1968, acrylic on canvas, 42 x 30 inches
- 4) *White Yellow Black (Driver)*, 1968, acrylic on canvas, 42 x 34 inches
- 5) *Figure Yesterday*, 1969, lithograph on paper, edition of 8, 12 x 9 inches
- 6) *Ibi Progression*, 1970, acrylic and enamel on wood panel, 22 ½ x 19 inches
- 7) *Whassis*, 1970, ceramic earthenware wall piece, 10 x 11 inches
- 8) *Stranded*, 1971, oil on wood panel, 22 x 13 inches
- 9) *Movingment II*, 1973, screenprint on paper, 16/65, serigraph, 25 x 19 inches
- 10) *Sina Ma*, 1974, woodcut and drypoint on paper, 5/15, 38 x 25 inches, Gift of the Artist, Brauer Museum of Art, 2008.11
- 11) *Tectonic Ohio Soul*, 1976, pastel on paper, 12 x 18 inches
- 12) *Tilted Cloud*, 1976, ceramic stoneware, 16 x 15 x 6 inches
- 13) *After the Morning*, 1979, acrylic on unstretched canvas, 12 x 16 inches
- 14) *Panes*, 1981, acrylic on canvas, 18 x 22 inches
- 15) *Earth Metaphor*, 1982, ceramic (stoneware), 13 x 15 inches
- 16) *Wounds and Maps*, 1995, watercolor and pastel on paper, 9 ½ x 13 inches
- 17) *Fullness*, 1998, acrylic and graphite on canvas, 32 x 24 inches
- 18) *The Unknown Fugue*, 2008, acrylic and tar shingle on canvas, 36 x 48 inches
- 19) *Senses*, 2008, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 inches
- 20) *Bathers at the River*, 2010, oil and ink on canvas, 40 x 48 inches
- 21) *Young Man Working at Table*, 2001, watercolor on paper, 14 x 11 inches
- 22) *I Sat and Wept*, 2010, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 inches
- 23) *Yellow Cube Dark Vessel Dialectic*, 2011, ceramic (earthenware), 11 x 4 inches
- 24) *Thoughts Upon Her Death*, 2012, acrylic and graphite on canvas, 36 x 48 inches
- 25) *Yellow Dialectic*, 2012, ceramic (earthenware) and acrylic polychrome, 8 x 5 inches
- 26) *Torqued Dialectic*, 2012, ceramic (earthenware) and acrylic polychrome, 15 x 6 inches



Yellow Cube Dark Vessel Dialectic, 2011,
ceramic (earthenware), 11 x 4 inches



Cheerful, 1966, enamel on board,
24 x 14 inches



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