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'Leslie Wayne: Recent Work' At Joseloff Gallery Aug. 30-Oct. 9

August 25, 2011 | By SUSAN DUNNE, sdunne@courant.com, The Hartford Courant



Leslie Wayne Animation from Don Porcaro on Vimeo.

Leslie Wayne studied traditional oil painting, and then switched to sculpture at the Parsons School of Design. Later, she transitioned back to painting, but the Parsons years left their mark.

"The experience of making sculpture had a big impact on the way I think about making paintings," Wayne said in an interview from her home in New York City, where she lives with her husband, sculptor Don Porcaro. "Paintings don't have to be a flat illusion of a three-dimensional world. They can be three-dimensional themselves. They can be built the way you build anything."

Wayne builds her works with thick layer upon thick layer of oil paint, in a riot of colors and textures, in works as wide as 14 feet, so thick and complex she can't work on canvas. "It's not strong enough. The paint gets too heavy," she said. "I have to work on wood."

A show of Wayne's recent work opens Tuesday, Aug. 30, at the Joseloff Gallery on the campus of the University of Hartford in Hartford. The show originated in January at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art in Charleston, S.C.

The paint is so thick, in fact, that it fools the eye. "It's hard to believe it's all paint," says **Lisa Gaumond**, managing director of the Joseloff. "It looks like leather, or paper."

Wayne gets her inspiration from the natural world, but not in the matter of a plein air painter, which she used to be.

"Creating a painting of nature from observation ... you have to be completely in the moment, reacting to the changing conditions of light and color," she says. "In a studio, I'm drawing more from associations, ideas of geology, geography, rather than thinking specifically of something I saw."

"Somewhere, it's always on my mind, thinking about nature," she said. "I'm thinking about the compression of layers of sedimentation, layers of history. All of it is translated into metaphorical layers of experiences in time."

The titles of her works reflect this focus on nature: "Before the Quake," "Red Tide," "Marianas," "Shift 'n' Flow" "Lulworth," named after a cove in England, and the intensely red "Exquisite Corpse."

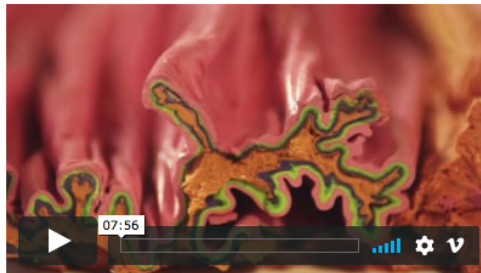
"That's a term the surrealists used, but I'm really speaking about toxic detritus at the bottom of the ocean," she said. "I'm not painting a specific picture of the ocean with junk on the bottom. It's an image on my mind."

"I made it red, because if you're going to articulate something disturbing, you should do it in a way that will seduce people," she said. "The red in that painting is almost bloody like. It's also a very beautiful, seductive color."

In addition her large-scale works — many of which are presented on multiple panels, because of the weight of the paint — the Joseloff show also includes several small-scale items from Wayne's "One Big Love" series, which takes its name from a Patty Griffin song that Wayne listened to, among other songs, while she created the works.

"Artists are always looking for insight, at least for a way to get into that zone where they can let go of the consciousness of control and let that metaphysical magic happen," she said. "One of the ways to do that is to listen to music."

"I decided before working on the paintings set up a set of conditions, in a way, sort of to push myself up against some limitations," she continued. "One was that they were all on shaped panels. No panel could be larger than 10 by 13. And I had to listen to music. I really wanted music to inspire me to go places I hadn't gone before I my work."



Leslie Wayne:Recent Work from John Reynolds & Lee Donaldson on Vimeo.

"LESLIE WAYNE: RECENT WORK" will be on exhibit at Joseloff Gallery, University of Hartford, 200 Bloomfield Ave., West Hartford, from Tuesday, Aug. 30, to Oct. 9. An artist reception will take place Sept. 8. Wayne will present a public lecture in the Koopman Commons from 3 to 4:30 p.m., and the reception will be in the gallery from 5 to 7 p.m. Details: <http://www.joseloffgallery.org>.