

INMAN GALLERY

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October 18, 2007

Inman Gallery presents an exhibition of
new work by:

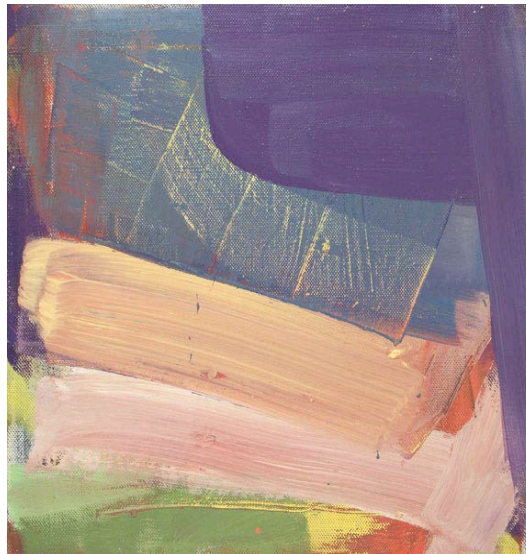
DAVID AYLSWORTH

A Mixture of Catholicism, Pasta, and Pornography

October 19 – November 24th, 2007

Opening Reception: Friday, Oct. 19, 6–8 pm.

Artist talk on Saturday, Oct. 20, 12 noon.



Every Time, 2007 oil on canvas, 19 x 18 inches

Inman Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new work by **David Aylsworth**.

A Mixture of Catholicism, Pasta, and Pornography is the title not only of the show but also of the epic-scaled canvas that is the cornerstone of the exhibition. Measuring almost 14 feet in length, it is the largest painting the artist has ever executed. The remainder of the gallery is hung sparsely with 3 large and three very small paintings.

Aylsworth's characteristic juicy expressionism is well in evidence; the exuberant marks and quirky color palette that have become signatures of the artist's practice, combine to create arresting paintings, which for all their provocative geometry and dissonant color, retain a personal, gentle attitude. The new works on view reveal a recent evolution to a certain restraint, with a visible tension between hard and soft, resolved and blurry. In addition, there is a more fully realized reference to figures in a landscape, and a feeling of monumentality, evinced by the simpler compositions. The artist confirms that he has been treating the shapes that emerge from his initial mark-making as characters on a stage, and striving towards a sense of theatre in each work.

Aylsworth's work evolves from the interplay of material and mark in the studio. This practice is necessarily a personal one, where the paintings' primary source of inspiration is internal, rather than external. The strong, often dissonant color combinations give the work a weighty air, while his titles (based on song lyrics) lend a certain level of light-heartedness and self-deprecation.

Born in Tiffin, Ohio in 1966, Aylsworth received a Bachelor of Fine Art's degree from Kent State University in 1989. He has lived and worked in Houston since participating in the Core Fellowship Residency Program at the Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX (1989-1991). In 2001, The Galveston Art Center mounted a ten-year survey of his work and produced a full-color catalogue. The exhibition traveled to Texas A&M University in Commerce and the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. In 2005 he was awarded an Individual Artist Grant from the Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County and his work was included in the Museum of Fine Art, Houston's exhibition, "Acquisitions in the Last Five Years: Modern and Contemporary Art", curated by the museums director Peter Marzio. His paintings can be seen in the permanent collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Dallas Museum of Art, and the El Paso Museum of Art.

Aylsworth's work was recently on view in the group exhibition **Camp Marfa**, at Fort Russell, Marfa, Texas. A solo exhibition of recent work will be mounted at the **Ellen Noel Art Museum of the Permian Basin**, Odessa, Texas in Fall 2008.

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In the north gallery:

Touko Laaksonen, aka “Tom of Finland”

Drawings from the 70’s and 80’s

The north gallery exhibition comprises 28 preliminary sketches by the Finnish artist Touko Laaksonen, widely known as Tom of Finland. Laaksonen’s career spanned 50 years, throughout which he focused on his now famous characters – buff, superdeveloped “macho” men, often in uniform, engaged in gay sex scenarios. The characters are archetypes – the handsome sailor, the stern but tight-chested officer – and they are cast as happy participants in a variety of sexual roles.

Laaksonen first made erotic drawings for his own pleasure, while working as a graphic artist in his native Finland. In 1957, he submitted several works to the publisher of the influential male beefcake magazine “Physique Pictorial”; the drawings were an immediate hit with readers. By the 70’s, Laaksonen had quit his “day job” as the chief of McCann Erickson’s Finnish-based art department and moved to the United States. Although he did some freelance work as a graphic artist, he was soon making his living selling his erotic drawings and publishing serial comic books.

Historians argue that Laaksonen had a profound influence on gay culture because he was the first to present hyper-masculine characters as gay. In addition, the images contributed to a sense of gay empowerment as the fantasy scenarios presented in Laaksonen’s drawings never betray a trace of shame – the characters are proud, sexualized and happy. Tom’s work contributed to the popularization of male archetypes, especially the popular “biker guy” – supermuscular, with the combination of cap, leather jacket and moustache. The 70’s disco group “The Village People” brought these gay fantasy characters to world-wide attention.

The drawings, as preparatory sketches, give insight into the artist’s process, and emphasize formal issues of drawing. One sees Laaksonen developing his narrative; variations in level of finish show his focus in each scene; sometimes the backdrop is articulated, a train car, window sill, or outdoor plaza. Often one figure is fully sketched, with carefully nuanced shadows highlighting particular endowment, while other characters are merely outlined.

Laaksonen’s work is in the permanent collections of many of the most prominent art institutions in the US including MOMA, The Art Institute of Chicago, LACMA and SFMOMA, among others.