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Interview With Pierre Durette – on the miniature, the not so miniature, and the detail

January 16, 2010 Artists, Global Art, Interviews No Comments

Q: Lately, there seems to be a return towards the miniature. I'm thinking of artists like Do Ho Suh or, closer to home, Karine Giboulo and Jason Walker. Is there something about our society that is leading certain artists in this direction?

A: I start with miniature characters as a pictorial trick. It's what allows me to create a larger scene on a smaller canvas.

Q: Your subjects – war, torture, ect. – are huge in and of themselves. Yet miniature is often reminiscent of childhood and hiding things in pockets... trivial innocence, fun, and somewhat secretive. Why choose to paint something "so big so small"?

A: In making it small we have an aerial point of view like God's eye. I can make a bigger scene by using smaller scale characters.

Q: Miniature began with illuminated manuscripts – it was a means of conveying the written word. The "written words" in your series are "devotion" (the title) and "HOLY". I think of the obvious and historic confrontation between Christianity and Islam and the present day confrontation. Are the works a political, post 9/11 commentary?

A: Yes, it's inspired by 9/11 but the majority of inspiration stems from the Abu Ghraib jail where the torturers picture themselves in action. Since always, each war brings out the same thing in those involved with it. It's the almost mechanized repetition of what it brings out that is explored in this series.

Q: There's an incredible element of play in your work – the school bus, the police car juxtaposed in the middle of historically dressed figures. Moreover, they too retain some of the "toy like" qualities that the figures possess... All of this lends to the work a certain nonchalance. There does not appear to be any overt judgment on the various horrors going on. I can't help but think of our modern day immunity to the war and destruction that surrounds us. Are the works an observation of our neutrality/indifference to our present day world?

A: The scene and placing of time with an anachronistic play is what I like best in my work. Create a universe where we can see a few small scenes and if we see all the drawing it forms a bigger different scene.

Q: How would the series be different if you had decided to depict the figures on a larger scale?

A: A few years ago, I began a new series (no longer miniature) entitled "Expiations" (the one on my website). The idea came from my wish to isolate a scene in order to make it larger. My desire was to express clearly the tensions of torture.

Q: There is something very abstract about your work. What has prevented you from becoming purely abstract?

A: Abstract art has no interest in my practice except for the pictorial composition.. From far, my small characters look like stars constellations

Q: What's next for Pierre Durette?

A: Next step is to finish the series Expiations. My next work is a series of photographs where I'll go deeper into my research on traffic identity in times between middle age and science fiction.

All pictures for this article were provided by the Artist. Checkout Pierre's website at www.pierredurette.com. Pierre is represented by galerie Orange at www.galerieorange.com

