

First Solo Exhibition for Dave Bondi at Taryn Teresa Gallery

by Editor | Published June 6, 2008

SANTA MONICA, CA.- Tarryn Teresa Gallery presents the debut solo exhibition of Los Angeles-based artist Dave Bondi. Always eye-catching, Bondi’s vivid three-dimensional paintings serve as a clever candy-colored branding trick. Their seductive appearance is actually a disguise for the artist’s passionate position on human behavior/philosophies and their resulting effect on our planet. Although the works are undeniably entertaining in that ubiquitous and alluring pop culture manner, Bondi’s work is a far cry from pure formalistic pursuit. Although he believes that art is meant to be enjoyed, he also believes in its power as an instrument for bettering human consciousness. Much like the controversial artist Joseph Beuys – a subscriber to the utopian belief in the power of universal human creativity – Bondi turns to art as a healing force and an outlet for political change. Bondi is a champion of pragmatism and egalitarianism. For the artist, his work is an appeal towards rational thought and an appreciation of the scientific process, as opposed to the violent confrontation between ideas fueled by religion and politics.

The centerpiece in The Preservation of Decay is a magnificent curled palm branch that hangs from the ceiling and drips shiny urethane resin and foam. The rich, glossy, turquoise and teal colored droplets create the illusion of a puddle of wet paint oozing out over the gallery floor. Surrounding this sculpture are several large scale three-dimensional paintings which have titles named after major scientific discoveries made in the last decade. Through the work, Bondi asserts his belief in science and rational thought as the answer to our current woes. Furthermore, his use of organic materials such as palm fronds and feathers points to a desire to preserve the very things that we are quickly destroying as a result of overpopulation and environmental issues such as global warming. “The resins I use will not decay and therefore insulate the organic material in my work from the natural bacteriological breakdown it would face if left to the elements. The art is ironically a manifestation of my desire to sample, manipulate and slow this natural process of decay – an effort which will inevitably fail.” At the same time, it must be noted that Bondi’s work also contributes to the consumption of plastic products – the fact of which he is well aware. He reminds us, “The origin of petroleum is rooted in the decay of massive amounts of dead organic material from millions of years ago. The dried plants used in my work are meant to symbolize this fundamental material, destined to dissolve into the earth and given the right combination of preservation and tectonic force, become resurrected as coal, oil and natural gas.” These products are then used to produce the petroleum based compounds with which Bondi creates his art. On a fundamental level, the resins and foams are simply an altered form of the palm frond itself. Everything from material to process are carefully considered by the artist.

Bondi’s process and choice of materials are integral to the conceptual and formal nature of his work. His work can only be produced through very precise chemical reactions and environmental conditions. Each piece is essentially a frozen moment in time, a preservation of a moment and a comment on its ultimate decay. The scientific process and the desire to preserve natural resources are literally manifested in the work. An integral part of his process is trying different methods and materials. This is partially due to the unstable nature of his media, but also through a natural desire for experimentation. Inevitably, each piece becomes a balance between controlled gesture and the surrender to the conditions and materials. There are multiple layers to each piece. The working time is very short, sometimes with less than a few minutes to complete an action. When the chemical reaction stops, the material is left frozen in its final state and becomes the foundation for the next layer. They are undoubtedly action paintings and as a result, obvious formalist comparisons must be drawn with Jackson Pollock and Abstract Expressionism. Bondi sites resin and foam pioneer Linda Benglis as a great inspiration, along with science-inspired Matthew Ritchie and pop culture phenomenon, Takashi Murakami.



In Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor, 2008, (*pictured above*) we see swirling gestures of blue, red and white lines ripple and bend out from the surface, while curved masses of expanded purple foam rise up through each layer. Transparent resins embedded with metallic or interference powders are suspended while they themselves support tiny delicate lines of color which dance on the surface. Bondi states, “The final goal is to create a new kind of 3-dimensional compositional tension that challenges the viewer to decipher how it was built. For me it is a kind of alchemy; an affirmation of my belief that art is a process and not a physical object.” Much like other works in the series, in Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor, we see the work take on the physical characteristics of its title. In this piece there are two layers of activity separated by one symbolically porous membrane. This layer of polystyrene sheet functions much like an SSRI does in the brain. Our brains are always generating serotonin and then re-absorbing it into our bodies through a membrane, where it is metabolized into 5-Hydroxyindoleacetic acid. Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor is a comment on this notable scientific discovery which is now the most widely used method for treating depression. Although it may seem far-fetched, there is even talk of engineering more serotonin and dopamine into humans on a genetic level to create more empathy in our species. This is something which intrigues Bondi on the level of bettering mass consciousness and increasing non-violent resolution of conflict. The Preservation of Decay is a body of work that questions the notion of decay on a multitude of levels. It ranges from a commentary on decay in the natural world, to decay in society and humans, to the use of decay to measure time through carbon dating and even the use of the term “decay” on a sub-atomic level in quantum physics. Most of all, Bondi’s work is a reminder that through the enjoyment and appreciation of art, we can hopefully encourage people to engage in discussions and initiate positive change in our world.

Dave Bondi received his BFA in Industrial Design and Sculpture from the University of Michigan. He has over fifteen years of experience working as an artist and animator for such notable entertainment companies as Mattel, Activision, Electronic Arts and the television comedy “South Park”. Over the past few years, he has been involved with the designer/art toy movement as a sculptor for cult favorite Kid Robot in collaboration with Joe Ledbetter and Luke Chueh. His first vinyl toy “akashi” is nearly complete. He also serves as an adjunct professor of art at Cal State University, Dominguez Hills. Bondi lives and works in Venice, CA.

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