

Daniel Herr
Time and a Half
July 8 - August 6, 2023

Q & A conducted by Ryan Golden Kirkpatrick

RK: Your work in this show is medium to large scale...what you described in our conversation as “human scale.” One might say that a confrontation occurs at this scale that doesn’t with smaller work. Are you inviting the viewer to confront something? Their own humanity or the humanity of others?

DH: It’s more that I’m a relatively large person and I need to have a relatively large world to step into. I don’t really think about the viewer when I work. The size of the brush or mark-making tool relative to the size of the picture is also part of how the overall compositional structure informs the human experience of seeing it. I find that when you reach a certain size, say 70 x 60 inches, as these are, you really have a different feeling in looking at a picture in relation to your own hand than you do in a small format. And I’m using a figural motif to begin each painting, so I guess I feel like I have to make work that I can be fully immersed in.

I can see your work’s relationship to an AbEx painter like Grace Hartigan (see: *Broadway Restaurant*) both in its material rendering and in that it straddles the line between abstraction, non-objective art, and representation. Being that the contemporary moment we are in requires much different considerations than the mid-20th century, can you elaborate on the meaning that your work is intending to convey and what, if any, social/political issues that it is addressing?

Painting is worth doing just because. I think to try and elevate it by attaching it to some type of lesson or social commentary is not something I would even know how to do. I enjoy looking at paintings that simply let me in on an experience. And it’s that exchange—a viewer witnessing subconsciously an artist’s experience that drove them to make the image or object—that’s the thing for me that does not change. I suppose nowadays people look at things for less time than they maybe used to. Part of that is of course the ubiquity of images swirling around in your hand all the time, and also that there’s just more art on display now than there ever has been. If there’s something I’m always trying to do in my work it’s to slow down and look at something for a really long time. The result is that oftentimes my paintings take a long time to make. Is that a political act? To try and cut yourself off from the barrage of images being thrown at us?

In our conversation, you discussed that painting—especially within fine arts academic institutions—is no longer the dominant discipline that it once was. As someone with an MFA, how do you feel this shift is affecting your work, your relationship to your education/past work, and how you see painting in general progressing?

I was fortunate enough to have worked with a few professors for whom painting was, for lack of a better word, sacred. I’m not really involved with academia at the moment so I guess I don’t have the most expert opinion on it. I have, however, seen that schools are hiring fewer and fewer painting faculty since I’ve been out in the world. A lot of people must think it’s not as relevant a skill as, say, digital art—and they might not be wrong. I think as a painter though, you have to figure out a way to carve a place out for yourself no matter what happens.

You have (somewhat) recently moved from New York to Los Angeles. These are two very different cities that both boast having a tight foothold on the current art market. Certainly historically New York has been a more dominant source of painting than Los Angeles. However Los Angeles, over the last 15 years, has increased its presence significantly. How has the transition changed your work, your artistic vision, and your understanding of your role as an artist?

I moved mostly for personal reasons that really had nothing to do with the art world. I will say that L.A. has a lot going for it these days, though the audience for art I still don’t think is as big or entrenched as New York’s.

Los Angeles and California, as a whole, have a much different relationship with space and time than New York. Can this difference in culture be seen in your work and in your studio practice?

I actually had a friend who I've known for a long time visit recently and he immediately pointed out a painting that I had shipped here, though he'd never seen it and didn't know I shipped it. He just could tell I made it in New York. I don't know if I could have told the difference. It takes time to see where you were at a given moment clearly. I find that I go to my studio now more days out of the week but not necessarily for a full day, whereas I used to only have a day or two a week to work and felt I really had to make it worthwhile. As far as the culture goes, I don't know. I had always been the laid back California guy in New York, now I guess I'm the uptight New Yorker in California.

Though the New York School/Abstract Expressionist movement is positioned and understood as very "American," many of its painters originated in other places (DeKooning from the Netherlands, Arshile Gorky from Armenia, Mark Rothko from Latvia, to list a few). Do you consider yourself an "American" painter? If so, what does that mean to you and how does that show up in your practice?

I love that question because it really shows how important cross-cultural contact is. I think the idea of what an American painter is in 2023 is fascinating, because I really have no idea. I've traveled a lot and met artists from every continent. I've always lived in big cities. I look at art in person almost every single day. I think to be a relevant artist today you need to be in contact with as many different types of people as possible.

Who are the contemporary writers, poets, painters, musicians, etc. that you feel your work is in conversation with?

I would say I'm in conversation with anyone making work today, regardless of where they're from or their age. Obviously I've always tried to surround myself with painters and painting enthusiasts. But I think we're all doing the same thing, which is to make work we care about.

What is the significance of the show's title, *Time and a Half*?

I just really like the way that phrase sounds. It has a great kind of rhythm to it. Ostensibly it refers to labor and compensation, but it could also refer to time in general. What if you cut time in half? What would that even look like?

Daniel Herr received his BA from UC Davis and his MFA from Boston University, and has exhibited his work at Safe Gallery, New York; Steven Harvey Fine Art Projects, New York; Last Projects, Los Angeles; Airplane, Brooklyn; The Java Project, Brooklyn; Abigail Ogilvy Gallery, Boston; the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC) Santiago, Chile; and Inside/Out Art Museum, Beijing. He has been invited to participate in artist residencies worldwide, most recently at Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Alva, OK. This is his first solo exhibition in Los Angeles.

Ryan Golden Kirkpatrick is an artist and educator based in Chicago.

For inquiries, questions, or to make an appointment please contact (323)-376-0004 or shallow.bath@gmail.com