



Maps of Columbia, SC's Commercial & Institutional Gallery Spaces

City Art Gallery in Columbia, SC, Features Works by Joe Byrne

City Art Gallery, located in the Congaree Vista area of Columbia, SC, is presenting the exhibit, *Industrial Strength Abstracted Realism*, featuring paintings by Joe Byrne, on view through Apr. 9, 2011. A reception will be held on Mar. 17, from 5-8pm.

Growing up in Brooklyn and Long Island, Byrne lived near chaotic docklands and bleak industrial parks. His astonishing new body of work draws on an early exposure to intricate winches, hydraulic pistons, and other muscular machines.

Most of Byrne's realistic pieces zero in on a moving part - a latch, piston or gear. With technical precision Byrne conveys the tension of nuts and bolts on an I-beam, the force of hydraulic pistons, and the ballistic motion of swing levers on a steel door. So lifelike is the image that you can practically feel the heat reflecting off the paint surface, or hear the squeal of a corroded hinge, that this girder is holding up a bridge or that this truck is idling outside your window. While these pictures capture the physical beauty of steel, they convey the conceptual beauty of strength, pure and simple.

Some of these machines have done hard work. Their rust, holes, scrapes, and gouges prove it. Given the planar surfaces, hard shadows, and straight lines, these images of "Big Metal" could hardly be called "organic." Byrne's paintings imply a human presence through ingenious engineering and English instructions: "open ... seal ... unlatch to close door." Simply put, these machines are projections of the men who designed, built and used them. These positive images celebrate industrial tools as metal muscle.

When people ask me "who is your favorite artist," said Byrne, "most of the time I simply answer, well I like music from the classics to jazz. To me, it's the same with painters, but some of my favor-

ite painters are the abstract expressionists: Franz Kline, DeKooning, Pollack, Rothko, and many more. Even though I'm a High Realist painter (not to be confused with Photo Realism) these artists have had a great influence on my work in many ways. Plus, I always thought there was a wedding between abstract and realism, and that's what I always try to achieve."

Byrne continued, "When I choose a subject to paint, I might be attracted to a composition, textures, or simply a color field, but mostly it's the abstract that catches my eye, and I simply fall in love and have to paint it. Then, instead of painting the whole scene, I'll simply edit it down to the minimal. To me it's the isolation of the part that speaks to the whole."

City Art is more than an art gallery. We have a full line professional artist supply store - artist watercolor, oil and acrylic paint, artist brushes and palettes and accessories, lots of artist canvas and art papers, a fine drawing and pastel department, a custom picture framing department and we also offer art classes.

For further information check our SC Commercial Gallery listings, contact Wendy Wells, City Art Gallery by calling 803/252-3613 or visit (www.cityartonline.com).

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