



Angela Gaul/The Journal News

Artist Win Zibeon uses the visually unexpected to highlight his unusual paintings in his Blauvelt studio.

Artist playful with paintings

Words taken literally create scene that's a statement and visual joke

Emily Kratzer
The Journal News

The trompe l'oeil paintings that fill Win Zibeon's Blauvelt studio not only fool the eye but illustrate his dry sense of humor and playful ability to visually interpret wordplay.

For instance, his most-recent work is "Riptide," a small beachside scene that appears to have been ripped up, with half repositioned upside down. Wrong. It's one piece.

"Riptide" is part of his Anti-Landscape series, which reflects his concern for the environment — though he said he started doing them because he regards most landscapes as dull.

"String Theory," the landscape with an artist's figure walking a tightrope over an Alpine scene, speaks to man's increasingly precarious relationship with nature and suggests the figure might fall. "Axed" is a mountain scene which appears to have an ax imbedded in the canvas, symbolizing the destruction of the environment.

Zibeon's studio is an old barn that used to be the home of the Blauvelt Volunteer Fire Company. He works with his favorite music sauntering out of oversized speakers, classical sounds sometimes accompanied by the whistle and rumble of a passing train. On a rafter, spotlights roost like oversize shiny metal hens. His clean brushes stand in a circular rack on a wire cart that holds a stockpile of paint tubes.

"When I moved here, I saw birch trees being cut down for condos," he said, so he painted birch logs onto canvases that were stretched over birch logs. "One time a bird flew into the barn and landed on the tree — I even fooled the bird," he said, smiling.

He even has fun with his own spare visage — clean-shaven and bald, with rimless glasses — by showing half of his face and half of one of his Chinese masks on his business card.

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Win Zibeon

"I have an interest in masks. People don't show themselves as their true selves," he said. In addition to using those brushes, he paints with sponges and combs, joking "I don't need it for my hair!"

His appearance is a contrast to the complex concepts and illusions on his canvases. A visiting photographer was about

to ask him to remove the draping on one painting when he explained that its title is "Clandestine." He enhanced the effect of draped fabric by stretching his canvas over a shaped armature, giving the supporting frame rippled edges. Most of his works look framed, but they're not. He paints on his "picture-frames" to prevent others from adding overly ornate frames.

"My Weapons" series was inspired by a visit to the FBI building," he said. "You have a very psychological reaction. Someone lent me some weapons to paint." He sets off the gun images by using three shadows on the white backgrounds because without shadows the paintings were flat — "the shadows made them pop out and rise off the surface."

Zibeon is a member of the Piermont Flywheel Gallery in Piermont Landing, where his work is on display through tomorrow. He also has been exhibited at the Van Brunt Gallery in Beacon, the Hopper House Art Center in Nyack and the Rockland Center for the Arts in West Nyack. In 2006, he won the first prize in painting at the Columbia County Council on the Arts' juried art show.

He said he starts with pen or pencil sketches, then goes to the computer to manipulate the images and then paints in either acrylic or oil. When he works in oils, he has several canvases going at once because they dry so slowly. He prefers acrylics, he said, because it's easy to do overlays.

"The secret is you have to stare at the object for hours and hours, break it down to its physics, engineering," he said.

He's always engineering his next work — neat stacks of studies for future paintings are posted on a peg board above his white work-table.

"It's a 9-to-5 thing, but fun, not totally serious. Some artists you look at their work and get depressed. In mine, I'm telling a joke," he said.

Reach Emily Kratzer at ekratzer@ohud.com or 845-578-2444.



Win Zibeon

"Riptide" is part of Zibeon's Anti-Landscape series.