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Artist Discovers ‘Sounds of Silence’ in new watercolor show



English contemporary painter, Tim Bavington at his new ‘Sounds of Silence’ exhibit on Wednesday, November 8. Photo courtesy: Benjamin Hager Las Vegas Review-Journal.

By Carol Cling on November 11, 2017

Artist Tim Bavington has learned two things in three years of teaching at UNLV.

First, “I’m surprised by how much I love it,” he admits. Especially because “I spent 25 years studiously avoiding teaching.”

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The second thing he learned: how much he enjoys painting watercolors.

“I was teaching it, and it occurred to me, ‘Why don’t I do this?’” Bavington says. So he did.

The result: “Sounds of Silence,” an exhibit of new watercolors at MCQ Fine Art through Jan. 5.

Only Bavington’s second gallery show in his adopted hometown of Las Vegas, “Sounds of Silence” finds the England native returning to his trademark method and style: translating elements of popular songs into geometric stripes. (It’s the same approach Bavington used to create “Pipe Dream,” his Symphony Park sculpture inspired by Aaron Copland’s “Fanfare for the Common Man.”)

In the past, Bavington usually created his canvases by spraying them with acrylic paint, giving them a bright, hard-edged look. (He’s also done pastel drawings.)

The new “Sounds of Silence” works, by contrast, display an “irregularity in line and texture,” resulting in a “much more painterly, much more loose” approach, according to MCQ Fine Art’s Michele Quinn. “This is Tim going, ‘don’t worry about where the lines go.’”

For Bavington, “I love the liquidity of the watercolors,” he says, citing “the delicacy and transparency” of the new works.

“It’s a different kind of freedom — that’s why I like it,” he explains. “To use brushes again is just wonderful. It’s invigorating and it’s inspiring, to discover something new.”

Despite the different medium, certain things remain the same in Bavington’s work.

“Not everybody can handle this much color in a work and get away with it,” Quinn says, pointing out the “irregularity in line and texture” that characterize the “Sounds of Silence” paintings.

As always, Bavington’s works are named after the musical works they’re based on, from the George Harrison-inspired “Give Me Love,” “Give Me Peace” and “My Guitar” (as in “While My Guitar Gently Weeps”) to the Carter Family’s “Wildwood Flower.”

In choosing songs for artistic interpretation, “I pick songs I like,” Bavington explains, describing it as “a Warholian or pop art approach. I like how the title evokes a reaction and response in viewers.”

Bavington’s been following the music-inspired methodology for 15 years, building a national and international reputation with works that are now in numerous museum collections (including New York’s Museum of Modern Art) and featured in galleries from coast to coast.

For “Tone Poems,” Bavington’s recently concluded solo show at New York’s Morgan Lehman gallery, he used songs with single colors in them, such as Jimi Hendrix’s “Purple Haze.”

Bavington “can always find inspiration in music,” he says. In that, however, he says he’s no different than anyone else, noting how others’ “lives are constantly influenced by music. I just happen to be a painter.”

Bavington reflects on memorial commission

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It's not the kind of commission Tim Bavington ever contemplated — or wanted.

But when organizers of a “Vegas Cares” benefit concert approached the artist about creating a public memorial for victims and first responders following the Oct. 1 shooting on the Strip, Bavington agreed to do exactly that.

“I don't know how I could say no,” he comments. “It's an honor” and “an incredible thing to be asked to do.”

Although “you don't want to have to contemplate even doing it in the first place,” Bavington says, “art does have the power to bring healing and catharsis.”

The Nov. 5 “Vegas Cares” benefit concert at The Venetian raised more than \$100,000 for the project. Performers included Jewel, whose song “Mercy” will serve as Bavington's inspiration for the memorial, which the artist expects to be “something different” than his “Pipe Dream” sculpture in Symphony Park.

As for those who question raising money for a public memorial in the first place, “there are memorials that mark every tragedy,” Bavington points out. (He's donating his time; the funds raised will go toward materials for the sculpture.)

“I think the cause is absolutely worthy. A memorial would be an important thing,” he says. Besides, “I like to stay out of the politics. I'm an artist. If I get asked to make some art ... I don't get into why.”

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