



Peter Stanick fuelled by the desire to produce images

The basic concept of Peter Stanick's work is a question of perception. Intrigued by the idea of perception (or lack there of) in common, everyday tasks, Stanick spent a long time pursuing this question within the conventional aspects of the art world before becoming involved with the internet in 1996. Today, with technology advancing to the level it has, Stanick can now pursue images that may have not been possible ten years ago. Loueze Harper spoke with Stanick about his work and, in particular, the idea of perception within his images.

'I've always been interested in producing images,' says Peter Stanick, adding that for him, there was never any other option than to be an artist. "To a large degree, the reaction to my images was irrelevant. It's always beneficial if your work is well received, but I never let that have any influence on what I would do.'

Enhancing creativity

Born in Pittsburgh in 1953, Stanick obtained a BFA in painting from Carnegie Mellon University and an MFA in painting from Indiana University in Pennsylvania. While he doesn't believe that creativity itself can be taught, Stanick would argue that the major benefit of education is 'to enhance or generate creativity that already exists'. To this end, Stanick admits that from a personal perspective, the education he gained had its purpose. 'My education has a profound effect on me on a daily basis and was the foundation for every piece I have ever done.' Having said that, Stanick would advise prospective artists to pursue a college or university education, rather than attend a dedicated art school. 'It's very important to come into contact with creative individuals who study writing, acting, history or math,' he explains.

The pop art movement

During college, Stanick found himself increasingly intrigued by the work of the pop artists of the sixties. 'I found the mechanical approach used by Warhol, Wesselman and Lichtenstein appealing,' he says. 'But even more interesting to me was the choice of subject matter. The elevation of everyday images, objects and situations caused me to look at everything differently. I related to the mechanical approach, which was reassuring because it was the method that I used in my own paintings. This was probably a result of an emphasis on producing images that were informative rather than expressive.'

The motivation from within

As a painter, Stanick does not have clients. And while he admits that pop art certainly had an impact on the way his work developed, the major influence was the work itself.

'The sole motivation to produce work comes from within,' he says. 'I create paintings because I have a desire to produce images. No one else dictates content or direction, it is entirely self-motivation.'

Once he produces a series of pieces, they are then exhibited in a gallery where the public can view them.

'At that point, I usually start work on the next series.'

Stanick reveals that his goal is to produce images that are totally reflective of his interests, so therefore, it would follow that the ideal source material and the major influence is his own work.

'My current painting dictates the next,' he explains, 'and groups of work define possible future directions. While this process is constant, there are always going to be outside influences which may affect me as a person and therefore define some part of my work.'

Living in a digital world

While even five years ago, it was common to see digital technology used in film, music and print, the art world has been a lot slower to embrace these advances. Today, digital work within the art world is much more common, but it still lags behind other industries. Over the past ten years, the most important outside influence in Stanick's work has been the internet.

'The internet and working with digital images had a direct and immediate impact on my thinking,' he says, adding that the internet not only became part of the creative process, but the controlling factor. 'To me it was obvious, the digital world via the internet was the future.'

The website

Initially, Stanick used the computer as a tool to prepare the images of his paintings for presentation on the internet, but it soon became apparent that he needed to make the presentation as visually strong as the paintings themselves.

'The computer defined the presentation and the presentation started to influence the imagery in the paintings. Everything started to revolve around how images were processed digitally,' Stanick explains. 'I wanted to go beyond simply altering or enhancing images, I wanted to somehow

create digital images that truly took advantage of existing technology.'

So with the idea of developing a system of producing images that could first function within the online world and then become actual pieces of work, he reversed his previous process of producing his images. 'To a certain degree, my website can be viewed a sort of a virtual studio, while the pieces are not quite works in progress. The viewer can see what I am currently working on since it is updated on a daily, sometimes hourly, basis. The website itself is a work in progress, always changing, never ending. It has become part of the process and actually has an influence on future work.'

A style process

'The style of my imagery has developed in the same way as I describe the content; the graphic simplified approach best reflects my interests as a person and artist,' Stanick explains. 'Since I prefer to simplify images (one flesh tone for a figure or minimal use of colours for objects), the emphasis is on form. I choose source material where the form is the most important factor. Not every image can be simplified and still project the perception, so very often I need to enhance the form. For example, a figure may be interesting, but simplified it may just appear to be a cut-out. To enhance the form, that cut-out needs another shape—a bikini, a bra or a tan line enhances the form with the addition colour.'

Animations for the future

Stanick explains that his process is very similar to old school animation in that each piece is a series of drawings on different layers—very similar to animation cels with a background and a series of overlaying cels combining to form a total unit. With this in mind, Stanick can see his images lending themselves quite nicely to animated work. 'Over the years, I have produced hundreds of individual pieces, with many more to come,' he says. 'While I view each piece as a single unit, a logical progression might be to produce some type of animation which brings everything together.'

www.stanick.com

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Next exhibition January 2008
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