

Nicholas Sistler & Tom Szewc

Inverse Proportions



Nicholas Sistler, *The Green Key*, gouache



Tom Szewc, *Bourgeoisie*, oil on canvas

College of Lake County
Robert T. Wright Community Gallery of Art
May 19– June 23, 2006

Inverse Proportions

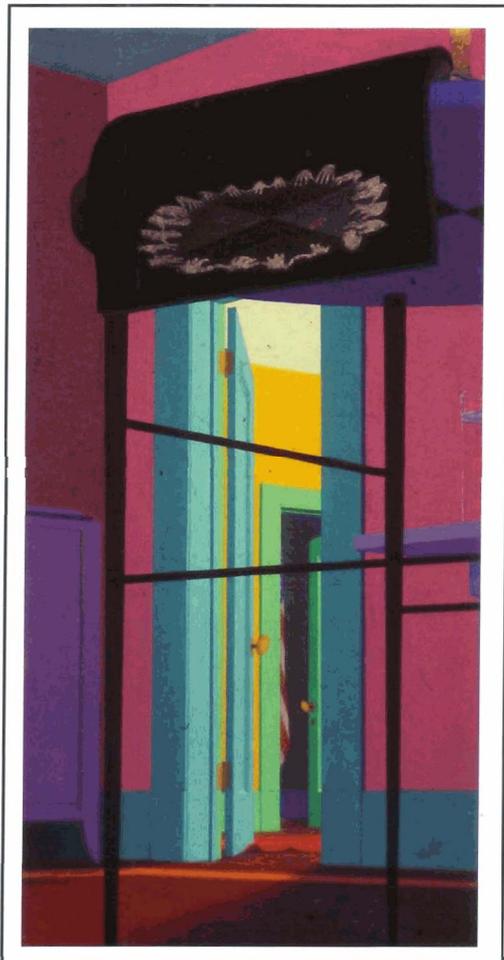
Every child with a toy telescope marvels at how it brings their view of the world so near. Invariably, the same child will look through the wrong end of the scope. Now that same view has become miniaturized. One end of the scope maximizes; the other end minimizes. The same can be said of the two artists represented in this exhibition.

Inverse Proportions brings together the paintings of Nicholas Sistler and Tom Szewc for the first time. The scale of their works represents two opposing attitudes. Sistler works in a minute format of just a few square inches. Sistler's pieces are intimate, drawing the viewer in for a close look. He is interested in the irony of deep space and monumental scale within a minute format.

On the other hand, Szewc's canvasses are large and commanding. One of Szewc's works, a triptych, is seventeen feet in width. Tom Szewc paints monumental figures that are usually depicted outdoors in an urban environment. These are not static portrayals, but rather people in motion.

Scale is an essential element for an artist's expression. Nicholas Sistler concentrates his vision into petite paintings of room interiors with implied figures. However, Tom Szewc paints sizable images of people passing on the street. Together their works create an exhibition of Inverse Proportions.

Steve Jones
Art Gallery Curator



Nicholas Sistler
Prescription, 2005
Gouache

Nicholas Sistler

Artist's Statement

I am interested in the irony of creating a deep space and/or a monumental scale within a very small surface. This paradox engulfs the viewer in a diminutive realm, leaving the everyday world behind.

In 2002 I began a series of paintings that include images of the human figure. There is room for the viewer to enter these miniature settings because these figures do not occupy the spaces depicted. Instead, they appear in pictures on the walls, floors or tabletops. These images of figures are in dialogue with the domestic interiors they occupy, each adding to the story of the other. The people depicted reflect some aspect of how they are objectified within our society, treated as different or other. The tendency to dehumanize others can be seen as a defense to avoid experiencing difficult feelings, and also allows the viewer to maintain an illusion of power over the "object" of the viewer's vision.

This viewer/object power struggle also exists between the viewer and my paintings, whether the viewer is consciously aware of it or not. Drawn in by the brilliant color and intricate detail, becoming intimate with the painting, the viewer is often confronted with a disturbing (powerful) image. If presented in a larger format the image might push the viewer away. The size relationship between the viewer's body and the small scale of the painting allows the viewer physical dominance over the painting, while an unusual perspective contradicts this supremacy by persuading the viewer to be submissive to the image. The physical/psychological tension of this struggle is at the heart of what holds the viewer's attention, calling into question the power and even the very physicality of the viewer.

Nicholas Sistler Biography

Nicholas Sistler received his BFA from the School of the Art Institute in 1980. Sistler practiced performance art from 1977 to 1985 receiving critical acclaim both locally and nationally. He has received several grants from the Illinois Arts Council, including an Artist's Fellowship Award, and four residencies from the Ragdale Foundation.

Sistler's work has been published as book cover illustrations, greeting cards, and as illustrations on a deck of artist designed playing cards to benefit the Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization. The Block Museum at Northwestern University published a limited edition multicolored lithograph by Sistler. His works have appeared in more than 100 exhibitions, including 17 solo shows. Sistler is represented in Chicago at Printworks Gallery, in Santa Monica at Hunsaker/Schlesinger Fine Art, and in Boston at Miller/Block Gallery. His work is in the collections of the Rockford Art Museum, the Block Museum at Northwestern University, and Benedictine University, as well as numerous private collections coast to coast.



This program is supported in part by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. The Robert T. Wright Community Gallery of Art is a project of the College of Lake County Foundation.

Tom Szewc

Artist's Statement

I have always been drawn to the study of anatomy and figure drawing...it has been a life-long discipline. The study of anatomy is essential to my process. Initially I work from digital photography where anatomical detail is purposely lacking. I then recycle figure images, stripping them from their context. The isolated figures from disparate contexts are then combined to create a new reality.

I use chance to find my models. The individuals in my group portraits are from encounters in my daily life: ordinary people in motion. I depart from the traditionally accepted notion of portraiture, a single head in a motionless pose. Transcending this conventional approach, my once isolated models, work together to create a new movement, a new relationship, and what I refer to as a new group portrait dynamic. This new dynamic produces an intensified and palpable tension for me that is essential to my involvement in the work.

The most compelling image for me has always been the human figure. There is no limit to the scope of its exploration and expression. I am not interested in narrative situations, but rather, I wish to explore human dynamics and the resulting unique narrative of an invented group.

Tom Szewc Biography

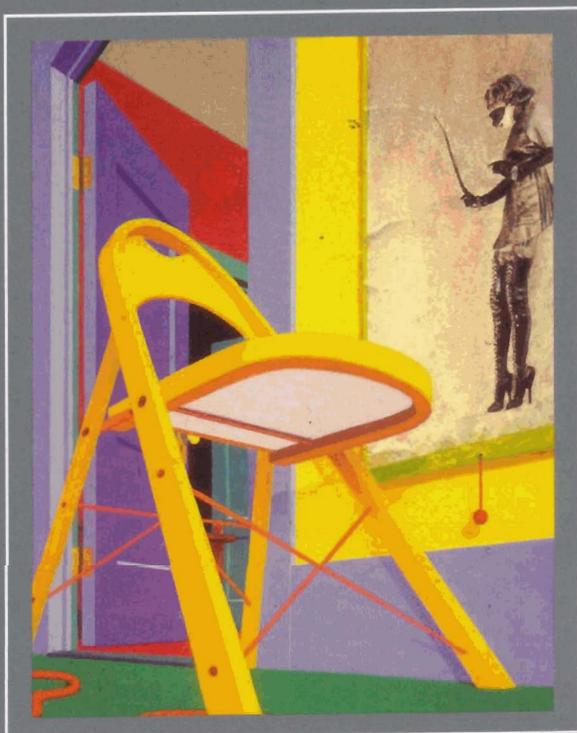
Tom Szewc received his BFA in painting from Philadelphia College of Art in 1974. Influenced by the work of figure painters at PCA, Larry Day, Sidney Goodman and Gene Baguskus, he learned the concepts and techniques of contemporary painting. Later, while studying at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, Szewc was influenced by the academic methods of figurative master, Arthur DeCosta. In the mid-70s Szewc moved west to California and attended figure drawing sessions with Wayne Thiebaud at UC, Davis and a workshop with Wolf Kahn.

Szewc has recently established a new studio in the Chicago metro area. Not long ago he met figure painter Zhiwei Tu, who encouraged him to "think big...and paint figures...not just one figure, but lots and lots of figures." Szewc embraced Tu's wisdom and the result is his mature subject and style: large format group portraits of figures in motion.

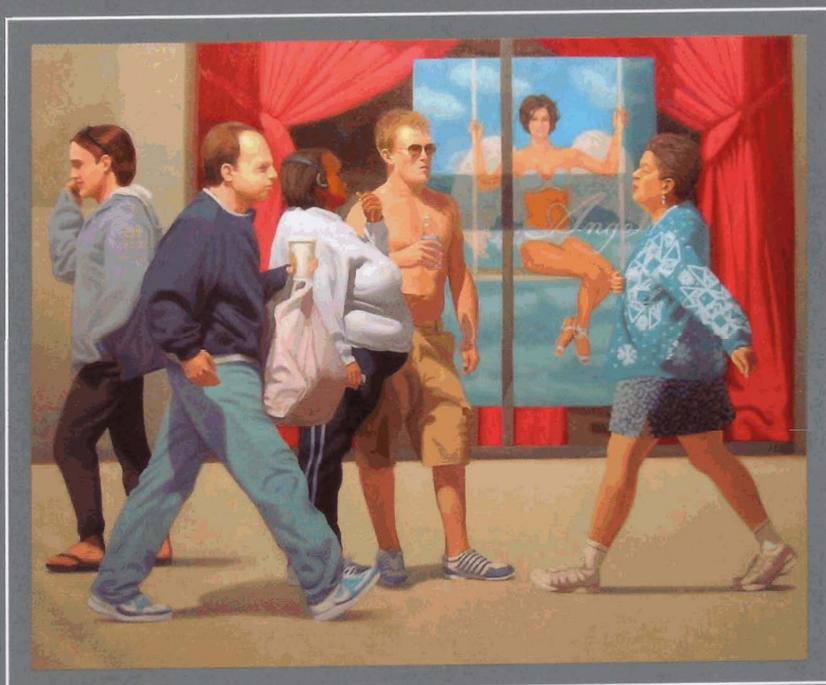
Szewc has participated in numerous group exhibitions and juried shows in California and Illinois.



Tom Szewc
Jefferson Street, 2005-06
Oil on canvas



Nicholas Sistler
The Chair, 2004
Gouache



Tom Szevc
Life in Progress: The Devil, 2006
Oil on canvas

Inverse Proportions

Exhibition Checklist

Nicholas Sistler

Confirmation, 2005, gouache, 5" x 3 1/4"
Prescription, 2005, gouache, 6" x 3"
Rose and Thorn, 2005, gouache, 4" x 4"
The Chair, 2004, gouache, 3 1/2" x 2 3/4"
The Green Bucket, 2004, gouache, 3 1/8" x 3 1/8"
The Green Key, 2004, gouache, 4 3/8" x 2 7/8"
The Red Balloon, 2004, gouache, 2" x 4"
The Red Chair, 2004, gouache, 3" x 5"
Toy Firetruck, 2004, gouache, 4 1/4" x 3 1/2"
Dustpan and Broom, 2003, gouache, 3 1/2" x 2"
Electrical Outlet and Red Door, 2003, gouache, 2 1/2" x 3 3/4"
Lavender Mobius Strip, 2003, gouache, 3 1/2" x 2"
Clear Glass with Red Straw, 2002, gouache, 4" x 2"
Fragile Vessels, 2002, gouache, 6 7/8" x 2 1/2"
Ink Bottle, 2002, gouache, 2" x 3 1/2"
Invisible Man, 2002, gouache, 2 1/2" x 5"
Paper Clip and Clock, 2002, gouache, 3 1/2" x 2"
Stripes and Narcissus, 2003, gouache, 3" x 4 1/2"
Three Arched Doorways, 2002, gouache, 1 1/2" x 4 9/16"
View with Eyeglasses, 2002, gouache, 3 1/2" x 2 1/2"

Tom Szewc

Life in Progress: The Devil (left panel), 2006, oil on linen, 54" x 66"
Life in Progress: The Angel (center panel), 2006, oil on linen, 54" x 66"
Life in Progress: The Dog (right panel), 2006, oil on linen, 54" x 66"
Bourgeoisie, 2005-06, oil on linen, 54" x 66"
Jefferson Street, 2005-06, oil on canvas, 54" x 54"
Art Fair, 2005, oil on canvas, 16" x 20"
Authority, 2005, oil on linen, 54" x 66"
Bicycle Boy, 2005, oil on canvas, 64" x 48"
Joseph, 2005, oil on linen, 40" x 24"
Vanilla and Chocolate Friendship, 2005, oil on linen, 48" x 30"

Information:

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College of Lake County / Robert T. Wright Gallery

19351 W. Washington St., Grayslake, IL 60030

Upcoming Exhibitions at the Robert T. Wright Gallery:

Beth Bird and Helen LaCroix: Prints, June 30 – August 11

Reception: Friday, July 7, 7-9 pm

In Glorious Black & White, August 18 – September 30

Reception: Friday, August 18, 7-9 pm

Recent Works: A Juried Competition, October 6 – November 5

Reception: Friday, Oct. 6, 7-9 pm