PATRICK FARRELL
JOSEPH HRONEK
HAROLD SUDMAN

Realism to Trompe L’Oeil

August 25 - October 1, 1989

Opening Reception: Friday, August 25 • 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Music by: Flute A Deux

Community Gallery of Art
College of Lake County
REALISM TO TROMPE L’OEIL

Like the ancient alchemists who attempted to transform lead into gold, Patrick Farrell, Joseph Hronek and Harold Sudman are attempting to transform paint into reality. These Realists achieve a very sophisticated, nearly photographic level of finish to their works. Some of these works can be categorized as trompe l’oeil realism. This French term literally means “deception of the eye.” A painting of this type is perceived by the viewer to be the actual three dimensional object it depicts. A Realist painting is perceived as a graphic representation of the subject giving an illusion of space and depth on the flat surface.

Patrick Farrell
“Laurel in Silver,” 1988, oil, 18" x 21"

PATRICK FARRELL

Milwaukee artist Patrick Farrell, for over twenty years, has carved out a niche for his work using a double edged blade. He is a painter of super realistic still lifes and trompe l’oeil assemblages, but when exploring the figure, Farrell’s brush cuts deep into the realm of Magic Realism.

Farrell’s small still lifes are composed and rendered in such a way as to impose a sense of grandeur on little snippings from nature. A piece such as “Laurel in Silver” becomes a symphony of curvilinear forms from the laurel leaves to the reflections in the pitcher. “Early Apple,” attests to the artist’s acknowledged influence by the 18th century French painter Chardin.

One of Farrell’s trompe l’oeil pieces, “Angel in Blue,” is comprised of layers of torn images which refer to Marlene Dietrich. Appropriately painted to fool the eye, this work, like the Hollywood personna it represents, is an illusion.

Farrell’s figurative works, while maintaining the same super realism of his still lifes, create challenging juxtapositions of people and objects. These Magic Real pieces are ripe with psychological associations. Farrell explicitly paints a bare torso topped by a shrouded head. This “self portrait” reveals more about the artist than meets the eye.

Patrick Farrell
“Self-portrait,” 1985, oil, 27" x 16"
JOSEPH HRONEK

Joseph Hronek, a part-time CLC art instructor, attempts to challenge the viewer's concepts of the objects he so realistically paints. Hronek's works are a blend of two divergent sources. Hronek says of his influences, "From the Flemish miniaturist school of the late 14th and early 15th centuries comes the exact replication of the physical world. From the conceptual school of the 1960's comes the concern with "objecthood" and the link between image and language."

Hronek's subjects, usually simple and straightforward, are painted with every subtle nuance of color and form. When he renders a pomegranate in a bowl, for instance, the image becomes almost edible. The physicality of his subjects is offset by the manner in which they are displayed. Like an early altar piece, the paintings are often framed with a predella beneath them. This appendage to the work functions either as a formal statement or as a design element. In either case, it produces an iconic image out of contemporary subjects.

"Painting of the Madonna's Cloak in Florence" exemplifies Hronek's fusion of realism with a conceptual element. The cloak is a rendition of da Vinci's drapery study. Its strong sculptural forms contrast with the flat, gray surface painted beneath it. The predella is a reminder that the cloak is really only an illusion of depth.
Harold Sudman, of Chicago, has pieces ranging from realistically rendered drawings in a triptych format to trompe l’oeil paintings depicting torn photographs. Both modes indicate a fascination with the human figure, particularly the face.

Sudman’s series of drawings entitled “Relations” utilizes fashionable figures to create social commentaries. “Relation’s II” presents a beautiful, young girl whose face is veiled by her hair. She is bordered by two grotesque figures hanging upside down. Sudman’s triptych suggest a contemporary “vanitas” (vanity) theme to illustrate the fleetingness of physical beauty.

In “Relations III” a tentative looking youth is flanked by embracing couples on the side panels. The work conveys a young person’s inner turmoil compounded by the media’s idealization of love.

Sudman’s stylish figures become fragmented in his trompe l’oeil paintings. In one untitled work a piece of a photograph reveals only a portion of a woman’s face with one eye staring at the viewer. This photo fragment is set within a small, gold frame which casts a shadow. The framed photo, set within a much larger frame, loses its supposed objectivity when it is discovered that the photograph is really a painted illusion.

The illusion these three artists present to us is no mere slight of hand. It has required years of painstakingly mastering their craft and ever maturing aesthetic sensibilities. Each in his own manner is an alchemist, turning inert pigment into gold and enriching us all.

Steven Jones, Curator
College of Lake County

The Community Gallery of Art is a project of the College of Lake County Foundation.
Gallery Hours:
8:00 am-9:30 pm Mon-Thur
8:00 am-4:30 pm Fri
10:00 am-2:00 pm Sat
1:00 pm-5:00 pm Sun

Closed
August 26 & 27
September 3 & 4

The Gallery is located in the west wing of the main building.