

PHOTOS: New York Artist's Mobile Murals Stop At The Kemper Museum

By LAURA SPENCER • MAY 30, 2015

Brooklyn-based artist Adam Cvijanovic paints on sheets of a tough, durable product called Tyvek. It's often used to wrap or protect a building during construction, but for Cvijanovic it provides the canvas for his large-scale portable murals.

"I am really interested in narrative because I'm very interested in time," says Cvijanovic. "And I think painting as a plastic art, as a frozen moment in time, can offer insights into it."

The artist recently walked through American Montage, a survey of about 15 years of paintings at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, to talk about his work and process.



Iolanthe: Flashe acrylic and house paint on Tyvek, 2005

PHOTO: EG SCHEMPF COLLECTION OF THE ORANGE COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART, NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA

1 of 5

"It was a chance discovery. It was just luck. I was looking for a kind of paper that could take a lot of water, because I wanted to do large water things. As it turns out with the Tyvek, not only does it take a lot of water, but it glues right on the wall and comes off — and that kind of changed everything. That meant I could do things like this show, where everything can come down and get packed up rather than getting painted over or scraped off the wall or something, and it makes it very different."

It seems like you also use a variety of paints, from house paints to latex paint.

"Yeah, well, I use something called Flashe, which is a vinyl acrylic. And it has a very high pigment content, so the paintings are very punchy, but they're also very flat. Sort of thinking of these things almost like mobile frescoes or something. And the Flashe, the chalkiness and the flatness of it, kind of pushes it back slightly. (So) anyone who walks in front of it comes forward a little bit, which is important because they're social paintings, in a way. They're so big. You will often see (a painting) with other people walking in front of it, or walking to the side of it. And that's part of the painting."



In the exhibition there are several references to film, including "Belshazzar's Feast," a scene of ancient Babylon from D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916). Buster Keaton is also featured in one of your paintings. What was it about him as a character or as an innovator that influenced you?

"In America, as a representational painter in the 21st century, I think it's impos-

'Belshazzar's Feast,' a scene in the court of ancient Babylon from the D. W. Griffith film, 'Intolerance.'

CREDIT LAURA SPENCER / KCUR



Childhood of Buster Keaton: Flashe acrylic on Tyvek, 2009
PHOTO: EG SCHEMPF COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND POSTMASTER GALLERY NEW YORK

sible not to also engage with what happened in cinema in the 20th century. Because the images in there are profound and they're deeply embedded in our culture and our sort of personal DNA of looking, at this point.

So, Keaton and Griffith are both great innovators in that way. Keaton had a sense of American landscape and space, which was just sublime and not equaled until John Ford came along 20 years later. And Griffith invented cinema, effectively. But both of them being from that early point of silent film in that funny transition where filmmaking was looking at painting."

One work that premieres at the Kemper in this exhibition is based on the Flint Hills.

I'd read that you visited in 2014?

"It was the cusp of spring and summer, the grass was short and very green when I was there. It's an amazingly beautiful landscape ...



Behshazzar's Feast: Flashe and latex on Tyvek on wood, 2008
PHOTO: EG SCHEMPF COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND POSTMASTER GALLERY NEW YORK

What I have here is a painting on seven panels that are kind of trapezoid. And they are tied together, so it's almost like it's a half of a cylinder slightly unwound. Two of the panels are directly on the wall, three of them are below and coming and touching the floor, and two of them are above and that's the sky. The image on these panels is a road that's going off into the Flint Hills. And you're kind of looking behind someone who's walking down that road.

this microcosmic life. You look down at the grass and there's like a whole world in every foot that you're sort of walking through. And then you look up at the sky and it's this amazing, sort of, somehow it feels bigger. I don't know exactly how that works, but it does.

Rather than do a long, horizontal painting, I thought I would do something that actually folded around you and talked about that kind of relationship between the very small intimate scale of what's under your feet and the immensity of what's over your head."



Artist Adam Cvijanovic stands next to a piece inspired by a 2014 visit to the Flint Hills.

CREDIT LAURA SPENCER / KCUR



Nuart: Flashe acrylic and latex on Tyvek, 2006
PHOTO: EG SCHEMPF COLLECTION OF CHRISTOPHER HAMICK



The Fall (Capri): Flashe and latex, Tyvek, canvas, paper, plexiglass, recorded audio components, 2015
PHOTO: EG SCHEMPF COURTESY BLINDARTE CONTEMPORANEA, NAPLES, ITALY