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AMERICAN

art

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SPECIAL SCULPTURE SECTION
APRIL 2010



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UPCOMING SHOW

Up to 20 works on show
April 22-May 7, 2010
Arcadia Gallery Fine Arts
51 Greene Street
New York, NY 10013
(212) 965-1387

• SHOW LOCATION NEW YORK, NY

BRAD KUNKLE

Precious metals

Working mainly in gold and silver leaf with black and white paint, Brad Kunkle's paintings incorporate his take on the natural world, religion, the appeal of femininity and the properties of gold and silver to create technically precise works of art that allow the viewer to interact with them in ways usually not found in traditional painting.

Kunkle has been experimenting with gold leaf since college but has only recently discovered ways to incorporate it into his traditional oil paintings.

"I was doing some decorative painting, copper leafing walls in a building," says Kunkle, "and that was the last impression I needed. I knew I had to do something with gold leaf. Just standing in front of it and working and seeing the reflections shifting in the leaf and how light plays off it just did something for me. It had such a surreal quality to it."

So Kunkle started gathering as much information as he could on the process in order to add it to his oil paintings.

"At first, I experimented a lot but just couldn't find artists who were using it," says Kunkle. "But, I cross referenced people who I did know were using it, framers and such, and learned as much as I could about it and figured out how to use it in the most archival way I could."

Kunkle is a perfectionist and these new paintings show a reverence for the materials as well as a drive to make beautiful images that take full advantage of the different properties of the gold and silver leaf.

"I paint right on to it, so it's an oil gilding," says Kunkle. "I lay it and then seal it with a shellac which is the most traditional sealer out there. The shellac accepts the oils very well. And I paint in such thin layers so it is no problem at all. The new shellacs on the market don't darken with age. So I lay the leaf directly in certain areas and then paint around them."

Kunkle paints mainly in black and white though uses some other colors to brighten the canvas. The reflections he receives from the leaf and the ways light plays on it are both elements that led Kunkle to experiment with the gold and silver leaf in the first place.

"I feel like a lot of the relationship between the leaf, figures and the environment is similar to the relationship of the spiritual and material worlds," says Kunkle. "When I paint the figures, I want them to have a surreal quality to them, something otherworldly that transcends reality. Also, black and white has this timeless quality to it. The paintings are mainly about something that transcends what we normally see."



HIDE AND SEEK, OIL, GOLD AND SILVER ON LINEN, 24 X 24"



A photo of the model posing for *Hide and Seek*.



BRAD KUNKLE IN STUDIO.

PHOTO BY FRANCIS SMITH.



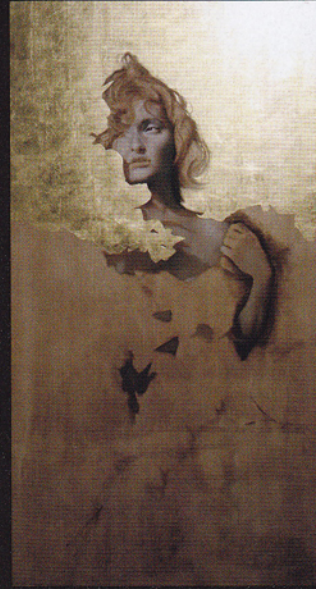
STEP ONE.

The artist says: A basic composition is worked out before I begin, leaving room for details to take place spontaneously as I work on each piece. After I apply my own layers of oil ground and sand the surface to the desired effect, I wipe a mixture of raw umber and ivory black on with a cloth, let that dry, and then begin the underpainting.



STEP TWO.

The artist says: I begin to gild the areas that will be foliage by brushing on an oil-based adhesive and using 22-karat patent gold leaf.



STEP THREE.

The artist says: This particular painting was so large that I had to gild a section at a time. While the adhesive is still not fully dry, I manipulate edges where the leaf meets the painting using etching tools or other sharp metal objects.



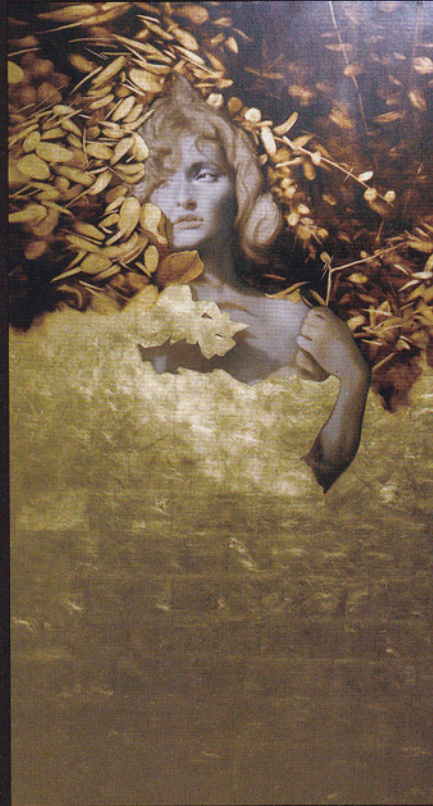
STEP FOUR.

The artist says: Using a soft chisel brush in a circular pattern, I 'burnish' the gold and remove the loose, overlapping leaf as I go. The step is also essential in working the gold into the weave of the canvas and making sure it's properly married to the adhesive. The area of gold below the elbow has not been affected yet.



STEP FIVE.

The artist says: The gilding is complete. A layer of shellac cut properly with alcohol for thinning is applied to the gold. This is an essential step when using silver to prevent tarnishing, but in the case of gold, it is important to creating adhesion for the forthcoming layers of oil paint.



STEP SIX.

The artist says: A thin layer of oil paint is applied with knives and brushes. With a subtractive 'finger painting' method, I use rags to paint the foliage and environment. There is not much room for error at this point. The gold is now acting like the white of the paper when using watercolor.



STEP SEVEN.

The artist says: The foliage is finished and I begin to work on the figure until the painting is complete.



REVELEN, OIL AND GOLD LEAF ON CANVAS, 60 X 33"



TWO SUNS, OIL AND GOLD ON LINEN, 21 X 12"



THE ARTIST'S TOOLS. PHOTO BY FRANCIS SMITH.



GOLD LEAF IS A PREVALENT MEDIUM IN KUNKLE'S WORK. PHOTO BY FRANCIS SMITH.



THE WATERING HOLE, OIL, SILVER AND GOLD ON LINEN, 45 X 36"



OCTOBER, OIL AND SILVER ON LINEN, 14 X 13"

The use of the limited color is also a part of Kunkle's painting philosophy.

"I felt like people who are colorblind. I think that color is kind of unnecessary to see something," says Kunkle. "You see something because of the way light reflects off it, not because of what color it is. I've always said that if you strip something of its color, you get closer to its truth."


Kunkle also hopes the paintings are able to give people an idea of the importance he places on our relationship to the natural world.

"I'm addressing natural forces, our place in nature, all these standards we've set throughout history," says Kunkle. "What's natural, what isn't? What's good and evil and where do we fit within that structure. And, I want to get at man's place in the context of all this."

Some of this also comes through Kunkle's use of the materials and the reactions that they get from viewers.

"One of the things that is interesting about the leaf and the painted surface next

to each other is that you are actually seeing real light in the painting," says Kunkle. "You are seeing a mirrored image of reality. There's actually part of reality in there. And, the other part is absorbing and reflecting light in a different way. It's very surreal when you see it in person because you are also seeing the light in the rooms." ●

For a direct link to the exhibiting gallery go to 

www.americanartcollector.com