



“The Age of Miracles”

Artist: Louis Risoli
 Courtesy of Gallery NAGA,
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A creationist of a different sort, Louis Risoli meticulously lays the ground work for an ordered, even meaningful existence, then mischievously covers his tracks with randomly applied shapes. Eons pass, or perhaps just minutes, and the artist returns to finish his work by adding layers of color and by uncovering, ever so slightly, evidence of the structures underneath. The result is often a physics Dagwood painting which both generates and satisfies a healthy appetite for existential complexity.

I have always been influenced by what I have read in addition to what I have seen. Books and authors have played the largest part in the crystallization of my views about painting and life, among them Peter Matthiesson, author of the “Snow Leopard,” “Coming of Age in the Milky Way,” by Timothy Ferris and Steven Hawking’s “A Brief History of Time.” I view my paintings as metaphors for life and utilize a system that allows for randomness and chance within a structured framework.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

“The Age of Miracles” is comprised of layer upon layer of translucent paint, which has been thinned down and shined up with the addition of stand oil, damar varnish and turpentine. The paint was applied with a paint knife, one layer gliding over the next. In places, top layers were scraped away to reveal what is below, a kind of archeology.

The painted patterns developed as the painting progressed. In this work, they began with vertical stripes weaving from top to bottom, often parallel but at times thickening and converging or, at other times, diverging from the parallel track. Color at this point in the process is arbitrary—it is not until the structure of the painting has emerged that I begin to make deliberate color choices.

Randomly placed circles about a foot in diameter were then drawn on the painting and a set of deliberate “rules” for the

establishment of patterns was conceived. The circles developed concentricities which were filled with alternatingly spaced rectangles, eventually obliterating the original vertical lines. Verticals that bisect circles were then filled with a running pattern of triangles, after which the circle was encased in a larger circle, the adjoining verticals filled, and this pattern repeated until the entire canvas had been filled.

The work then entered a black and white phase, where a coin toss determined whether a given row of triangle and rectangles would be painted black or white. Once the choice had been made for each row, the structural patterns of the work were set and the aesthetic phase began. In this phase, some modification to the patterns was undertaken, openings were established, layers of color were added or covered over, while a continuous effort was made to leave clues (edges of underlying colors left exposed, original patterns dramatized) that would point to the complexity of the overall creation while simultaneously establishing a visceral cohesiveness.

Near the end of the process, I added playful, arcing lines, reminiscent of DNA, to emphasize some of the narrative aspects of the work while establishing a quirky, frivolous dimension. These shapes often appear in my work, perhaps symbolizing the life force and the limitless potential of creation.