

ARTnews

The Diary of Mark Flood, Part Three: Attack of the Drones

BY MARK FLOOD - June 8, 2016



Editor's Note: This is the third installment in a multipart series about Mark Flood's experience organizing his first museum survey. You can read the other parts [here](#) and [here](#). The diary is slightly backdated because, as mentioned, he was busy organizing his first museum survey. "Mark Flood: Gratest Hits" opened April 29 at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston and will run until August 7.

Friday, April 22, 2016

1.

My unemployed buddy Ling was tired of the corporate grind. I suggested he join the Flood entourage, and work at our glamorous CAMH gig. He could search his soul while he pinned Lindsay Lohan clippings to the wall.

He said he had a drone camera. I said Great, but I didn't expect much.

My mental picture of drone activity involves the drone sitting on the ground while the operator attacks the controls in frustration. A secondary image is the drone smashing into someone's face or, worse yet, into a painting.

PERES PROJECTS

But Ling turned out to be quite skilled. He shot flyover movies of the install, and they racked up views on Instagram.

CAMH's director, Bill Arning, told me that other museum directors had seen the drone footage of my show. They had expressed Drone Envy. They said things like, We don't have a drone-cam yet but we're getting one! My exhibits are just as drone-friendly as yours!

2.

My zigzag wall of giant paintings got finished today. It looks great, and it's not going to fall and kill someone.

There was a party atmosphere in the CAMH all afternoon. Bill Arning and some staff came over. The Flood entourage loitered tirelessly. Visitors going to the basement got distracted, and hung out.

The CAMH guys used a cherry-picker to bridge the east and west wings of the wall with a long horizontal painting, perched overhead.

Visitors will pass under it to go backstage.

3.

This overhead painting is a silkscreen portrait of Jim Pirtle from the '90s. It's psychedelic, with multiple Jims dissolving into a flesh-colored mist with about 25 eyes.

Jim is an art genius, but he's the kind the art world can't readily use, because he doesn't play the game, and he doesn't care about the money.



Once, back in the '90s, Jim and I spent an afternoon inhaling a 40 lb. tank of nitrous oxide. We would blow up garbage bags and hit from them.

Whippet-huffing amateurs may not realize it, but nitrous is a hallucinogen. After an hour, my visual field was nothing but thin horizontal stripes, pink, white, and brown.

The Jim-creature hovered in front of the universe of stripes. We had a long conversation where we just said one word, back and forth, with various intonations.

PERES PROJECTS

I believe the word was...What?

4.

The zigzag wall of giant paintings looks just like I'd imagined. It has the feel of a hallucination. It was inside my head, and now, it's outside.

It's scary. What if some of the other things in my head were to materialize?

I've known a lot of people who got confused about what was inside their head, and what was outside. They thought the neighbors were conspiring, and the bushes were whispering, and the way the guys drove the forklift at work meant You Are Gay.

Saturday, April 23, 2016

1.

Here's a dispassionate survey of the lace paintings in the show.

Heaven's Gate

Lace paintings are my attempts to capture beauty, and use it to attract an audience that has little use for critical theories and anti-retinal readymades.

I'm sure that by now Dave Hickey is tired of hearing how I got the idea from him.



Art-morons frequently assume I developed lace paintings to make my art more commercial. They think the road to Art Success was always out there, clearly marked and waiting. The issue was whether an artist, in this case Mark Flood, was willing to make that shameful, sinful journey.

I guess they think I waited until I was 50 because I was so fucking pure.

Actually, painting beautiful lace paintings felt like career suicide to me. Conceptual readymades were the official highway to success. Art was to be propaganda in the service of Marxist revolution. You'd get your fair share of

PERES PROJECTS

glory in the workers' gulag, I mean, paradise.

Hideous was good, hideous signified Integrity. Beauty was career suicide.

Ah, suicide! In my younger days, I was into death.

First Song

I don't know if other artists do this, but when I see paintings I like, I find out what size they are. Then I have stretcher bars made of that size for me.



I had four made the size of Sigmar Polke's Paganini. This is one of them. It's seven feet tall by sixteen and a half feet long.

Large paintings create certain challenges. I had to find lace with large figures, figures that were big enough to activate this giant composition.

The figure on the left looks across the blue field, to the couple on the other side, and points his flute at them. They look back, listening. One's eye is directed back and forth across the rippling iridescent ocean.

How did I make that big blue expanse of brushwork so supernaturally regular? My secret is that I use super-brushes of my own design. They're three to six feet long, and have dozens of brushes joined together, on a metal armature that's bent like stair-steps. So every stroke I make is like 12 strokes, evenly spaced...if I do it right.

I sat my fat ass on a rolling metal cart, and my sad assistants earned their dough by rolling me slowly back and forth before the painting. I made little up and down movements with the super-brush, until the painting looked good.

When I first tried the cart technique, I thought all I would get out of it was a funny picture for Instagram. But it works.