

# Formally Speaking

Some folks ask me what formal qualities I am interested in. Here are a few:

## **Depth vs flatness**

How far in can we go? How far back should we pull, before losing sight of the territory? Software lets us create on multiple levels, making some transparent, others opaque, some rising up from underneath, others blocking our view of what lies below. Where do we stand?

In 18<sup>th</sup> century landscapes, we stand with the artist below the waterfall, looking up at the peaks beyond. But when we look at the way images build up on the computer screen, we are rarely sure where to plant our feet. As in some of Laura Owens' gigantic canvases, we are, one moment, on top, the next moment, behind, below, or beside. For me, this uncertainty, the sheer indeterminacy of our position, is part of the pleasure.

## **Clarity vs disintegration**

I like to see the pixels I am working with. Like a modernist, I enjoy showing, not hiding, the media I work in. Instead of smoothing over the pixellation that occurs when I enlarge the image, I emphasize the effect, as if to say, Look, this is what lies below the surface. Fuzzy? Yes. But, for a techie sensibility, clear.

## **Frozen vs moving**

The printed image stays put. But I hope that the eye is encouraged to follow my lead, to move in and out, to make comparisons, essentially, to do what Rudolf Arnheim calls "visual thinking." For me, composition just means acting as a sherpa for the eye, indicating where the best paths are, encouraging exploration.

## **Utility vs uselessness**

As I destroy the usefulness of the original map as a guide to the territory, the image loses most of its value as an aid to navigation, a context for understanding one's place in space, or a pinpoint for history. These values remain palely loitering in the background, like ghosts of soldiers killed on a battlefield so long ago; we only hear them calling out when the wind moves across the tall grass.

Horace was wrong: art may be sweet, but when it becomes useful, it becomes technical documentation.

### **Truth vs imagination**

We grant truth to a "real" map. We think, this must represent the way the road curves here, or the two highways come together over there. We grant this accolade of accuracy to official maps, ones with a high density of data, such as Google Maps. We believe the story that Google's camera-cars have really toured every road, even every alley, so that Mrs. Google can steer us correctly, even when we encounter a round-about in the middle of a French forest.

My work bears no such verisimilitude. You cannot rely on my imaginary map for turn-by-turn guidance as you drive. I am just imagining this graphic world. Like Italo Calvino, with his invisible cities, I see imaginary routes, communes, rivers. Like Jean d'Ormesson's mock-historical novel *The Glory of the Empire*, I document something close to reality, but not all there.

## About Jonathan Price

What are some of your solo shows?

*Alphabet in the Spectrum of the Rainbow.* West Broadway Gallery, NY.

*Balloon Poems.* Cooper Union, New York, NY.

*Canvas Photos.* Verle II Gallery, Hartford, CT.

*Edible I Ching.* Soho Gallery, New York, NY.

*Flophouse Follies,* with Joel Katz. Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH.

*I Ching on the West Side Highway, 18th to 23rd Streets,* New York, NY. West Broadway Gallery, New York, NY.

*I Ching Performance,* James Yu Gallery, New York, NY.

*Paste Ups.* West Broadway Gallery, New York, NY.

Where have you been in group shows?

Avant-Garde Festival, New York, NY.

Boston Visual Artists' Union, Boston, Massachusetts.

Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY.

Grey Art Gallery, New York University, NY.

Henry Hicks Gallery, Brooklyn, New York.

Jewish Museum, New York, NY.

Kensington Arts Association, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Librije Beeldende Kunst. Utrecht, Holland.

Loeb Student Center, New York University, New York, NY.

Museum of Parc Mont Royal. Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Pleiades Gallery, New York, NY.

Richmond Museum, Norfolk, VA.

West Broadway Gallery, New York, NY.

Whitney Counterweight. Soho, NY.

Who's reviewed your work?

*American Artist*

*Art News*

*Artists Review Art*

*Arts Magazine*

*Christian Science Monitor*

*New York Magazine*

*New York Times*

*Soho Weekly News*

*The Nation*

*Village Voice*

*Women Artists' Newsletter*

What are some books you've written?

*Get Past the Tags: How to Write (and Read) XML*, Communication Circle.

*Digital Imaging: The Official HP Guide*, with Lisa Price, from IDG Books.

*Hot Text—Web Writing that Works!* With Lisa Price, New Riders/Peachpit Pearson.

*The Virtual Playhouse for the Macintosh*, Hayden Books.

*Video Visions: A Medium Discovers Itself*. New American Library.

*Classic Scenes*. New American Library.

*The Best Thing on TV: Commercials*. Viking Press, Penguin Books.

*Life Show: How to See Theater in Life and Life in Theater*, with John Lahr. Viking Press and Penguin Books.

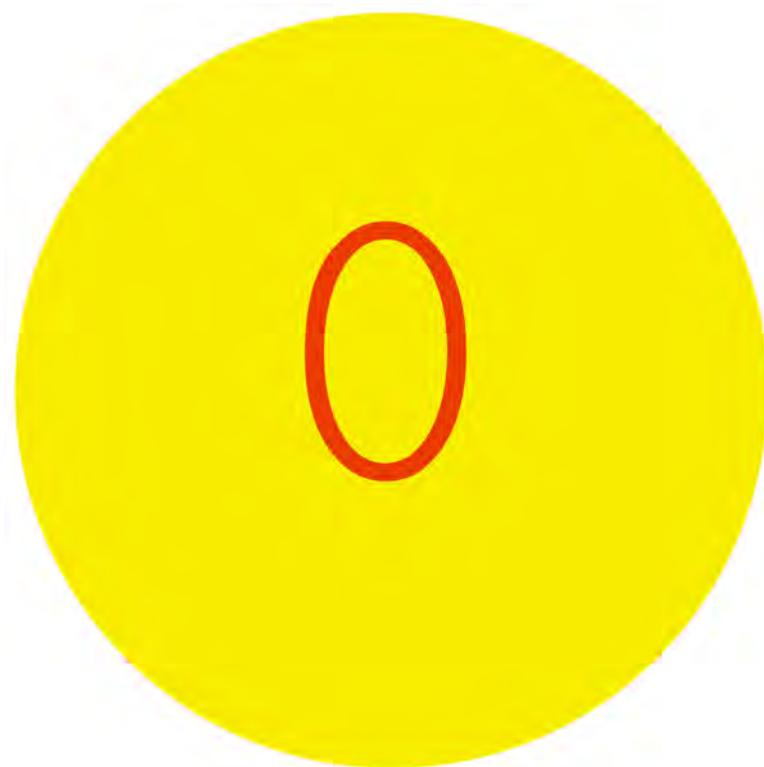
Where can we go to learn more about you?

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