Artist Statements

Ken Szmagaj

In writing about abstract painting, the poet, Octavio Paz states, “Abstract painters waver between stammering and mystical illumination.” I find that an interesting state to be in, establishing a space and working for a moment when an unconscious gesture appears to have meaning, finding light in the feeling of recognition and discovery in a structure that is coming into being. It is the ritual of rumination, play and discovery itself that is significant. In works composed from studio detritus, found objects and pieces from disassembled works, I improvise, looking for ways to make connections between the incidental, unrelated and fragmentary. I work with them until they yield a glimpse of something that is beyond their materiality. Rhythm and gesture are a means to create opportunity, continuity and sense of place. It is a provisional arrangement that may exist, seemingly, for only a moment. Fragments of familiar, mundane objects are often included as vague traces of human presence. I am intrigued with duality and incongruity within pictorial space; the transient and infinite in opposition to a desire for the tangible, tactile and absolute. Disparate elements or sections are often placed in a side-by-side linear sequence, or one over the other to create a frictional energy between the degrees of harmony and dissonance they may evoke.

Jerry Coulter

My task as an artist is to fit feeling to form.

I have always been interested in the expressive potential of the human form and how to use that form to get the expression in the painting as opposed to letting the figure merely stand for or symbolize something. That is why I generally work with figurative and non-objective imagery at the same time. My studio is often filled with figurative and non-objective paintings at various stages of development. I see no difference in the basic task of fitting feeling to form regardless of which type of painting I am working on at the time. I enjoy the freedom from realistic imagery in non-objective painting while at the same time facing the daunting task of bringing order out of chaos in the search of the perfect fit of form to feeling.

My task is to make the form expressive not descriptive.
5. Ken Szmagaj, *Sojourn Into Yellow*, 1987, Oil, sand, assemblage (wax, string)
7. Jerry Coulter, *Crouching Figure*, 2018, Charcoal on paper
24. Jerry Coulter, *Change 1 to I*, 1962, Mixed Media