

OKTP

CHRIS BROWN

8.01.2010

Chris Brown is an optimist who reworks material that celebrates ambiguity. There is always a sense of haziness in his work, regardless of whether it's abstract or representational: this moment is part of the last one and the next one. Nothing is too fixed. His act of painting reflects his positive nature and his idea of what might be possible, even when he incorporates memories from childhood. He is not revealing the tragedy of human existence. There is enough noise about that in the world. He is sharing his own confused relationship with the times of his life. Often mysterious, but almost always uplifting.

—Kenneth Caldwell

Q: This image looks familiar. It reminds me of the first print that you did here.

A: Right. That was called "Start." This is called "Arrival."

Q: Why did you start working with this image again?

A: I don't know. Maybe it's because I've been painting other trains, and these images are floating around my studio. I'm going through a phase in my work where I'm revisiting some things that I did years ago and thinking, well, those are still interesting to me.

It's based on a photograph that I took when I lived in Munich in 1974. I first

made some paintings based on it around 1977 or '78. And then again in 1992 or '93. It was 1997 when I made those prints here at the press.

Q: Can you talk about the train as an image? Does it appeal because of the idea of departure? The excitement of the unknown future?

A: It could be all those things. But my interest is really visual. I was interested in the idea of movement. I like the fact that the train was going one way and the figure was going the other.

Q: The trains could be moving in opposite directions too.

A: Almost everything I've done has notions of movement or blurring or some kind of visual confusion – where, because of motion usually, you're not quite sure what's happening.

I got interested in using the idea of movement to allow myself painterly opportunities for invention. For me, interesting painting explores the boundaries of what painting is capable of doing. It moves into the area of film a little bit. One of the things paintings can't do is talk about the passage of time very effectively.

Arrival, 2010

Color spitbite aquatint, aquatint and softground etching
Paper size: 33" x 45"; Edition of 40






Q: The passage of time?

A: This idea that you could somehow compress time in a painting provides a lot of opportunities for some kind of invention. So travel was a natural subject for me.

Q: What is the figure doing in this print?

A: To tell you the truth, I don't even know. This was taken in the train station in Munich, an enormous old station. There are several tracks laid out in front of you

and you can walk down these long concrete paths between the trains coming in and going out.

I walked down there and took photographs of what was happening. One of the things that's always interesting to me is the relationship between the abstraction of the geometric shapes and the organic figure moving in the abstract, modern world. Another kind of window, you know? 

Trackside, 2010

Color spitbite aquatint, aquatint and softground etching
Paper size: 19" x 38"; Edition of 40

Chris Brown and Pam Paulson in the studio.



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