escaping the rectangle: the art of william coronado
This catalogue accompanies the exhibition "Escaping the Rectangle: the Art of William Coronado"
on display at the Walsh Gallery, June 11 - August 16, 2007

ON THE FRONT COVER Monday Morning
ON THE BACK COVER portrait of the artist
All photographs courtesy of the artist, except back cover photo courtesy of Gianluca Bianchino
all measurements are in inches, height by width

©2007 Seton Hall University
All rights reserved

No part of the content of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the written permission of
The Board of Trustees, Seton Hall University,
South Orange, New Jersey.

The exhibition was curated by Gianluca Bianchino and Jeanne Brasile, Gallery Director, Walsh Gallery.

Seton Hall University
400 South Orange Avenue
South Orange, NJ 07079
USA
Phone: 973-275-2033
Fax: 973-761-9550
www.shu.edu
William Coronado and I met at New Jersey City University's fine arts program a few years ago. My memories of him at the time are that of a talented and ambitious individual who expressed vividly his concerns for the nature of the society we live in, and the uncertainties of its social and political platform. In art, William's sense for allegory had its roots in his teenage passion for comic books. However keen toward narration, he showed an ever-growing desire to portray the human figure in non-archetypal settings.

Now, a few years later, not much about him has changed other than having established a reputation as a working artist through a cohesive body of paintings and installations. William's broadly thematic work, including his break through series Transmogrifications, is a manifestation of the incongruent nature of our current information age. The work claims liberty in reinterpreting facts as well as myths in its own ambiguous form, raising questions about filtered news, propaganda, and recorded history.

Subject matter aside, my desire to bring William's work to the attention of the public has been enhanced by his ability to create new meaning within the general comprehension of space and time. Versatile and innovative in his use of the media, William fashions scenarios where realistically painted figures interact with three dimensional objects, video and light projections. His juxtaposition of different realities from various points in human history results in a compelling non-linear narrative. Through a parallel dimension of amnesia and redemption, the viewer is engaged on multiple levels in a search for innate knowledge hidden beneath the inner workings of mass culture, and is thus called to revise the significance of what is perceived as ordinary, or socially acceptable.

Gianluca Bianchino
Artist, Co-Curator
Follow The Leader
oil on canvas
62 x 65 inches
2005
William's story did not come out all at once, but gradually through several studio visits. My initial impression was that this man is incredibly prolific and accomplished as an artist. His former studio was large and rambling, and there was work everywhere. On my first visit he pulled out a number of paintings and laid them, unstretched, on the floor, in a stack that seemed exhaustive. He first revealed the series he calls Transmogrifications. The Transmogrifications, street scenes filled with bustling masses of people in urban settings, are painted in a sublimely realist style that underscores William's abilities as a painter. The large scale format of the Transmogrifications immerses you in the space of his city-scapes, which consequently reinforces the familiarity of the subject matter. But the real breakthrough in this series is the one element in each canvas that is silhouetted in white, leaving a figure-shaped rupture in the scene.

These ruptures create multiple, open-ended associations for the viewer. The ruptures function as a way to transmit yourself into the scene or concomitantly, as a metaphor for the emptiness in the souls of those who dwell in the urban settings William paints. However, there are other meanings that are just as valid. One of the things I respect about William's art is that he does not dictate meaning to his audience, but rather gives out clues and lets the viewer decide what associations work for them.

The next phase of William's development is in the form of cut-outs, derived from the Transmogrifications. Rather than leaving a white silhouette on the canvas, he cuts the canvas in the shape of a silhouette, leaving irregular edges, making it an impossibility to stretch on a frame. Instead, these cut-outs live directly on walls, ceilings, floors and columns, freed from the tyranny of the rectangle. While this in itself is innovative, there is the added component that William's cut-outs can be rearranged differently for each exhibition. This leads to shifting relationships and meanings between figures each time they are installed.
William continues to advance his inventive ideas as his work progresses. His new inspiration is the realization that his paintings succeed within the framework of installation art. William began to insert sculptural elements into his work a short time ago. At present, Coronado deliberately occludes the labeling of his work as strictly painting and more frequently integrates installation, digital art, sculpture and light into his work to create a cohesive whole. William's strength as a painter is only enhanced by the integration of various media into his work. Since William was already accomplished as a painter before he hit upon this mix of materials and flexibility in installation, it can not be construed that his recent direction is unfocused or immature. On the contrary, William's current direction underscores an acumen that many artists take decades to achieve, if at all.

While this exhibition focuses on William's development as an artist and his innovations in style and presentation, it should also be noted that his figures exhibit a humanistic element that is at once familiar and compelling to viewers, even those without a background or interest in art. It is natural for audiences to feel a connection to the figures and subjects he paints due to his empathy for the common person. His emphasis on themes of rebirth, hope, sadness and redemption resonate with each of us.

William's highly inventive streak and unconventional vision for the potential of painting is compelling. He is a talented artist, an innovative thinker, a focused visionary and a pleasure to work with. It is on this entire basis that I am pleased to present to you this exhibition, “Escaping the Rectangle: the Art of William Coronado.”

Jeanne Brasile,
Co-Curator, Gallery Director
Strolling Along
oil on canvas
60 x 64 inches
2005
"Welcome to the world of a most remarkable man. William Coronado brings to life each of our insatiable appetites for the beautiful, the honest and the sensitive without being brash or cliché.

The past ten years have taken him, and thus us, on a visual adventure of exploration, realization, apathy, activism, humor, fastidious perfection, disregard, denial, epiphany, awareness, experimentation, discovery, passion and I must not forget playfulness.

All with a paintbrush, well - many paintbrushes, which have delivered compositions which melt into a breathtaking color palette which place him in a distinct place with contemporary painters who are reviving the art of the ‘painting’ as high art form."

Herb Rosenberg, Artist, Chair, New Jersey City University Art Department
"William's painting concerns read more about finding a truth rather then the endeavor of itself. His successful interpretations of form and color on the two dimensional plane are both mysterious and attractive; whether a reference to a person or a structure, his forms float in this static medium. I realized it would not be long for his attention to drive him further."

Hugo Xavier Bastidas, Artist,
Associate Professor, New Jersey City University Art Department,
Art Instructor, Art Students League, New York
Seeing The Unseen
installation (oil on cut out canvas with tree branches)
variable dimensions
2006
Hands Search for God (two details)
installation
variable dimensions
2007
The Walsh Gallery would like to thank the following:

Xueming Bao,
Hugo Xavier Bastidas,
Paul Chao,
Alan Delozier,
Catriona Hill,
Ben Jones,
Dr. Howard McGinn,
Ron Myzie,
Herb Rosenberg,
S. Anita Talar,
The Walsh Gallery Advisory Board

Funding for the exhibition catalogue has been made possible through the generous support of Archives and Special Collections