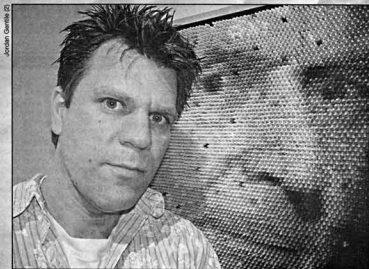


the Guide

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YOU CALL THAT ART?
Glenn Ligon represents
a minority within a
minority. 16

The CRAYOLA Einstein



ANY KID CAN DOODLE
WITH CRAYONS.

But it takes an expert in physics
to really appreciate them.

C By Jordan Gentile

Christian Faur was immediately attracted to wax. Its popgloss, its fluidness, its shine, its transparency—all of it, he assumed, would make viewers want to sink their teeth into one of his pictures. But he was having a little trouble painting with it.

The problem: Wax dries too fast. He couldn't blend colors. He couldn't work out small details.

For artistic was known like Jasper Johns—who became famous for stenciling rows of drifty letters, numbers and other abstract icons in primary color—this is too hard.

But Faur's work, for the most part, is realistic and figurative. Details matter. The illusion of depth matters. So the 38-year-old Granville artist—who holds a physics degree and works full-time as Denison University's tech guru—continued to struggle with the medium for years.

Then came Christmas 2006. Among the gifts Faur had bought his young daughter was a box of 120 Crayola crayons, just like the kind he'd used as a child. He hadn't given them more than a moment's thought when he tossed them into the shopping cart. But when he saw his daughter open the box, something clicked.

"I saw those tips—all perfect, all beautiful, just sitting there full of color," he said. "Eventually, you use them up and they're destroyed. But for that moment, they look so elegant. And that's what I was searching for."

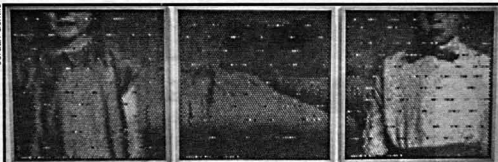
If he couldn't paint realistically with it, he decided he would meld his wax into thousands of homemade crayons, stacking them in such large numbers that they looked like pixels on a television screen and those pixels would, in turn, build to imagine—a child's face, a landscape, humbly—what achieved all the realism and depth he desired.

Aggregate States, a show that will run all month at Sierra Gallerie, is the result of the experiment.

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"I try to make sure that every element I use is not some arbitrary aesthetic choice!" Christian Faur

Jordan Gentile



"I love the ability for you, as a viewer, to walk up to the piece and be obliterated by the amount of detail"; Faur's "The Wind, the Wind," based on the story of "Hansel and Gretel"

CRAYOLA EINSTEIN

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The series is delightful in the way it suggests elements from both high culture and low—from mass-market products like Lite-Brite to the majesty of pointillism, a movement whose complex effects have captivated Faur ever since his stint in the army took him to many of the world's great museums.

"I love the ability for you, as a viewer, to walk up to the piece and be obliterated by the amount of detail," he said, "and then to walk back and see this incredible landscape. It's that push and pull that forces you to continuously be reminded that what you see is not what's really there."

In a way, though, Faur's paintings also turn Pointillism inside out. His thousands of color points are not the marks left behind by artistic implements—brushes, pens, crayons—but the tips of the implements themselves. In a sense, Faur makes viewers see things from the canvas's perspective, with a thousand crayons aimed right at us, ready to leave their pointillist image on our foreheads.

"You could look at it like the underside of a printing press," Faur said. "Its creation is not yet happened."

Faur makes his living as a digital media technologist at Denison University.

That means his job is to help the creative types at Granville's liberal-arts college use all kinds of high-tech tools that would otherwise baffles them.

With **Aggregate States**, his background in computers came in handy.

He begins each of his crayon mosaics by running a model photograph—yes, he uses other people's pictures as a starting point—through a computer program that isolates blocks of color in the image. He then draws a grid that tells him exactly where to place each of his crayons.

Faur admits the results would be somewhat uninteresting—"just photorealism in a different technique"—if it were not for his judicious use of color "blips" that go against

the muted overall color pattern. These vibrant touches give his compositions a note of beautiful discord, and, in many cases, they also contain coded information relating to the subject of each piece.

By assigning 26 of the crayon colors corresponding alphabet letters, for instance, Faur was able to drop the entire introduction of "Hansel and Gretel" into "The Wind, the Wind," a haunting triptych that depicts a well-dressed boy and girl walking along a dirt road, their eyes cropped out of the picture.

In "Euler," a portrait of mathematician Leonhard Euler, Faur did the same thing with numbers, sprinkling Euler's Constant—the famous mathematical equation that begins with "0.57721..."—throughout the composition.

Obviously, any artist who counts Leonhard Euler among his personal heroes is not your typical painter slinger. A science nut who taught math in Los Angeles before moving to Ohio, Faur is analytical rather than improvisational, crunching the numbers beforehand—especially on those complicated crayon mosaics—rather than running on pure instinct.

That's OK, he said, because one can find meaning and beauty in math just as easily as in art. To other people, the Fibonacci Sequence—discovered by mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci after he noticed that all of his rabbits bred at a certain rate—is just a formula. To Faur, who used the sequence metaphorically in a previous show, it represents fertility and renewal.

"I try to make sure that every element I use is not some arbitrary aesthetic choice," he said. "I need there to be thick, rich, syrupy meaning, even though nobody needs to know but me. It's just something I have to do."

INFO:

Aggregate States, featuring works by Christian Faur, will be on display at Sierra Gallerie, 694 N. High St., through February 11 at 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesdays-Fridays, 1 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays and 1-5 p.m. Sundays. 221-8580.

NIGHT MOVES: Eddie George didn't show up at Bungalow 27, but DJ Dimitrios Stanley made us forget all about Eddie. 18

MAJOR MINOR: Where is today's Miles Davis or Jimi Hendrix? Is black music in trouble? Has hip hop degraded the tradition? 22

THE AGENDA

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