

Complexity pushes sticks of wax beyond Crayola

By Kaizaad Kotwal
FOR THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Magical works that elevate crayons to a level of complex beauty are on view at Sherrie Gallerie.

The artist is Christian Faur of Granville, who was born in Hell's Kitchen in New York to a Hungarian mother and French father.

Faur received a degree in physics and mathematics from California State University, Northridge.

He lived in Chicago and Los Angeles before moving to Granville, where the 39-year-old is a media and instructional technologist at Denison University.

Faur has no training in art but has worked in a variety of mediums. He is an accomplished oil painter and, in the past few years, has explored encaustics, or wax mixed with pigments.

His latest work is best described as photo-realist sculptural paintings. He casts his own crayons to

► "Aggregate States: Christian Faur" continues through Feb. 28 at Sherrie Gallerie, 694 N. High St. Hours: 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays. Call 614-221-8580 or visit www.sherriegallerie.com.

meticulously control the shades and tones of colors. Then, using a computer-generated mapping system, he reduces an image to pixels dense with mathematical information and color indexing. Finally, the crayons are stacked into a frame to create the works.

From far away, the works become photo-realist portraits or landscapes. Up close, one can see each crayon point — as many as 5,000 of them in each work — putting a new spin on pointillism.

Q: How did you arrive at the notion of stacking crayons to create layered works?

A: Lauren Eisen, an artist at Denison, introduced me to encaustics. I was great at controlling oils, but with encaustics I had no control. It was very frustrating. I began to think outside the box.

Maybe I can somehow arrange bits of encaustic in a mosaic. Those works turned out to be very boring. Then on my daughter's birthday, I bought her a large box of Crayola crayons, and when I opened the box I saw all these wonderful tips.

Q: You created your own alphabet using corresponding colors for each letter and incorporated words and sentences into the images. Why insert text into works that are already complex and beautiful?

A: My style requires more information. I have always imbued my works with text, with meaning beyond the image. If I want the medium to be more than just a technique, it has to have multiple layers of meaning.

Q: One can appreciate your works for surface beauty, but to truly understand them requires work.

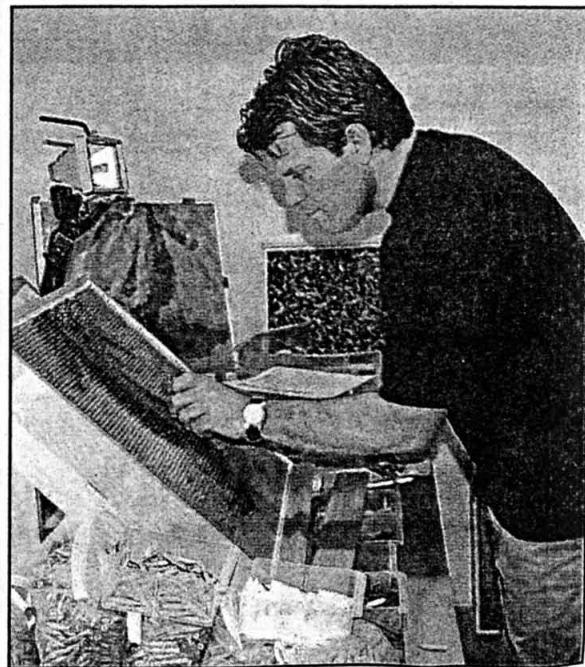
A: Yes. It is important that everything you do has meaning. The translating does take work. To me, a lot of things that are beautiful are things beyond their surface or literal meaning.

Q: From where do you draw your inspiration?

A: I am inspired by people not usually from the visual (world) — T.S. Eliot, Kafka, Orwell and lots of poetry and parables. In the art world, I love artists who take chances and jump around with techniques like Gerhard Richter and Anselm Kiefer.

Q: Does the heady stuff ever get in the way of just creating?

A: Why should it? It inspires me. Besides, being at the university, it sobers me because I am surrounded by so many brilliant people.



COURTESY CHRISTIAN FAUR

Christian Faur at work