

RICHARD TIMPERIO

There's a black and white, analog photograph (by Tom Warren) of Rich Timperio in cowboy hat looking dangerous and severe. He's played pistonhead, cartoonist for the NY times, art director of Showtime at the Apollo, is presently creator and director of Sideshow gallery, superb chef, and weaving through this life worth living anyway is the reflection -- drawing.. painting... -- that isn't apart from the thing it reflects, but swimming in it, like light on water.

The work winding its way to the present started out decades ago pop-transcendental, say, flamingos at war by a swimming pool. (Of course he managed a sojourn in California.) Absorbing influences of Bacon, Poons, Morris Louis, and others, he gradually shed the social critique to be all about matter, color, light, shape, line, painter's gesture. He wasn't old then, but he's even younger now. After a ten year hiatus, the present work takes a first step on a new path, happy with hopes and beginner's luck, limpid as rainbows gleaming in the spray of sprinklers in a suburban front yard, those spectral colors layered with the latest in manmade, calming tones for kitchens, baths, polyester sundresses, and leisure suits making yet another comeback. Most of the paint is so thin we don't think on the substance at all, but then a smear here and there or some built up parts at the corners of squared off zigzags remind us it's a material world. If bodies were there though, they'd float a few inches off the ground like the saints of Fra Angelico.

The colors play like reflections on a window, and because of the reflections, we can't see in. We're not supposed to. It's none of our business. Still, nothing comes from nothing, and I suspect that behind what he puts up for us to see ourselves in, Rich is an old-fashioned guy who mourns the state of the world by celebrating -- like when Cary Grant instructs Jean Arthur to face the music and sing without a hangdog look though his buddy just went down in Only Angels have Wings.

During our interview ,Timperio

takes note of the dress I happen to be wearing. He says painting's pretty much like that -- you've got to balance all the hundreds of elements and factors, what to cut there and add there to get the right color, lines, the feeling, the shape.

He doesn't imitate but does recreate somewhat a fifties retro, sublimely superficial, decorative look. He arrived at it for the same reason the jitterbug arrived at itself -- in the elation and denial that inheres in every smile.

It takes a tough man in times like these to eke one out, but "...the only living thing is yes.". Not "hell yes!". Not even "yes". Just yes. Life is that ungraspable. Unless you're e.e. cummings, the minute you say it, you're no longer playing it. If it doesn't slip through your fingers it's not water. Easy to pass by, we're so used to mirages, and you don't miss your water til your well runs dry.

by Veronika Shear