

Artist of the Day: Robert Burden

Robert Burden is a painter from California best known for creating large scale paintings of toys. This is his artist statement:

In 2006 I began a series of large-scale oil paintings depicting the small action figures that I played with as a boy. Initially these figures were set against fabric, wallpaper, and rug patterns from my childhood home. Over the years the decorative motifs have become more complex, and often incorporating toys from various generations, but the motivation behind the work remains the same. I am inspired by the amorphous line that is drawn between imagination and reality, childhood wonder and adult practicality, and the ineffability of what can turn a cheap yet coveted piece of plastic into an almost talismanic object. I remember these figures as being magnificent. They represented power, beauty, good and evil, and they captured every aspect of my imagination. As an adult these toys are wonderfully nostalgic, but they're no longer amazing to me. There is an obvious irony in spending hundreds of hours to create a single painting that glorifies a cheap, mass-produced toy. And while that irony could reflect issues of commodity fetishism, consumer addiction, Peter Pan Syndrome or even shallow idolatry, I want these paintings to represent something positive in my life. Although it was sheltered and naive, there was a freedom in my childhood. It was free from the politics of race and sex and religion. It was free from the weight of history. It was free from rhetoric and paranoia, shame and regret, cynicism and despair. There is nothing profound about commenting on the minor tragedy of losing one's innocence, or the struggle to maintain one's idealism. I just want to renew my faded sense of awe.

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This painting took approximately 2600 hours of studio time spread out over 3 years. It depicts nearly 250 different flying toys from various generations of pop culture, 8 pop culture references that aren't toys, 5 hummingbirds, 4 butterflies, 4 moons, 2 skulls and 1 da Vinci ornithopter.

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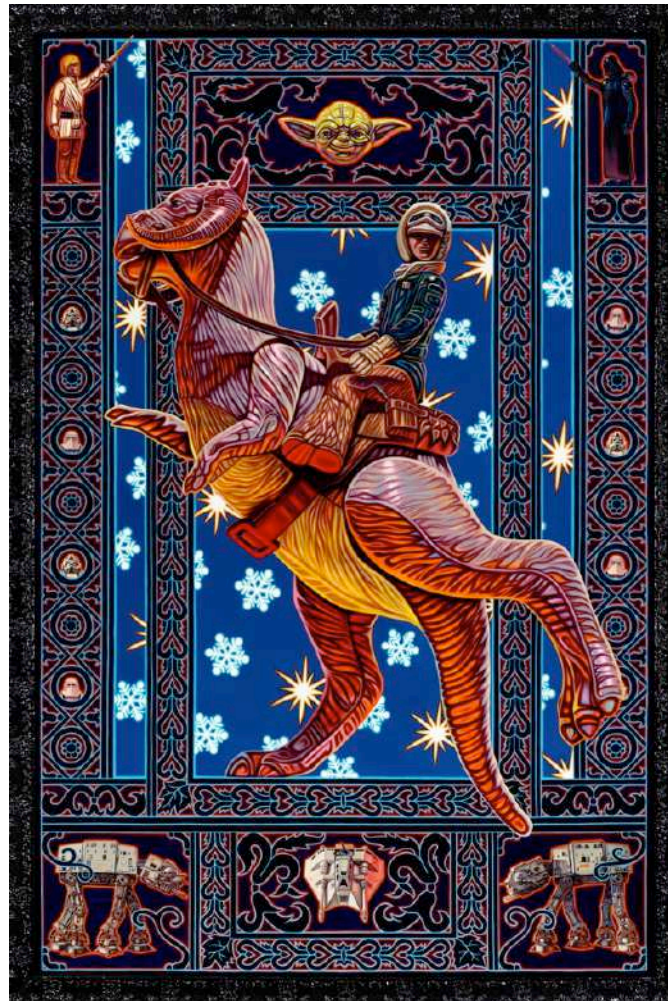
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