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#WeTwo: Aaron Parazette and Sharon Engelstein build artistic rapport with individual visions

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Oct. 16, 2018



Aaron Parazette's "Dust Devil," right, and Sharon Engelstein's sculptures "Misfit Bowls" (center) and "Tall Stack" are among works in their show "Each to the Other" at McClain Gallery through Saturday.

Photo: Molly Glentzer / Houston Chronicle

The pieces: "Hot Pool" and "Heroes for Ghosts"

The artists: Sharon Engelstein and Aaron Parazette

Where: McClain Gallery, 2242 Richmond, through Saturday

Why: At first glance, the work within Sharon Engelstein and Aaron Parazette's shared show at McClain Gallery does not suggest they think alike, much less see eye to eye.

Her small, glossy, bulbous ceramics look like organisms about to explode. His large, flat paintings evidence razor-sharp, geometric control.

But the artists, who are married, will tell you they speak the same artistic language, abstract and minimalist. "There's a lot of like-mindedness in our aesthetic sensitivities, even though our processes are different," Engelstein said.

They met more than 30 years ago at the University of South Florida and came to Houston in 1990 as Core fellows at the Glassell School of Art. Both have created monumental public installations; he often paints directly on walls, while many of her large works are bubblelike inflatables.

The McClain show is their first together in nearly a decade. They developed the works independently — both at a fine, confident and mature stage of their game — then delivered the pieces with no display instructions, taking a leap of faith that the gallery's staff would find the simpatico chords between it all.

The rapport is there, most rewarding when it isn't obvious.

A good place to start is the corner where Engelstein's "Hot Pool" sits on a table near Parazette's "Heroes for Ghosts." Her sculpture resembles a broken ostrich egg with a bit of the yellow yolk still puddled in the jagged white shell. The zig-zaggy lines of his 7-by-6 foot canvas create a sense of wavy movement with blue-gray and black shards against a yellow and white background. They are not mirrors, but one informs the other. Just as the show's title suggests.

Shouldn't every relationship be so great?

Engelstein and Parazette have always worked near each other, breathing the same creative air. At the studio behind their Montrose home, he works upstairs; she works downstairs. They glance at each others' progress — how could they not? — but say they don't talk much about it. They know, of course, that some influence is inevitable.

Three of Parazette's new paintings have spherical compositions built from a latticework of pin lines that create a faceted effect; they look like depictions of 3D objects. He knows Engelstein's biomorphic world influenced them. "I've been seeing this in my peripheral vision for seven or eight years," he said.

One of those canvases, “The Black Wizard,” hangs in a small room next to two drawings that I first mistook for his studies. Surprise: Those drawings — “Bowlful” and “Handful” — are by Engelstein. She seems to have had a very good time using the sharpness of ink to create images that look eye-foolingly out of focus.

“That room is the Rosetta Stone of the show,” Parazette said.

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