

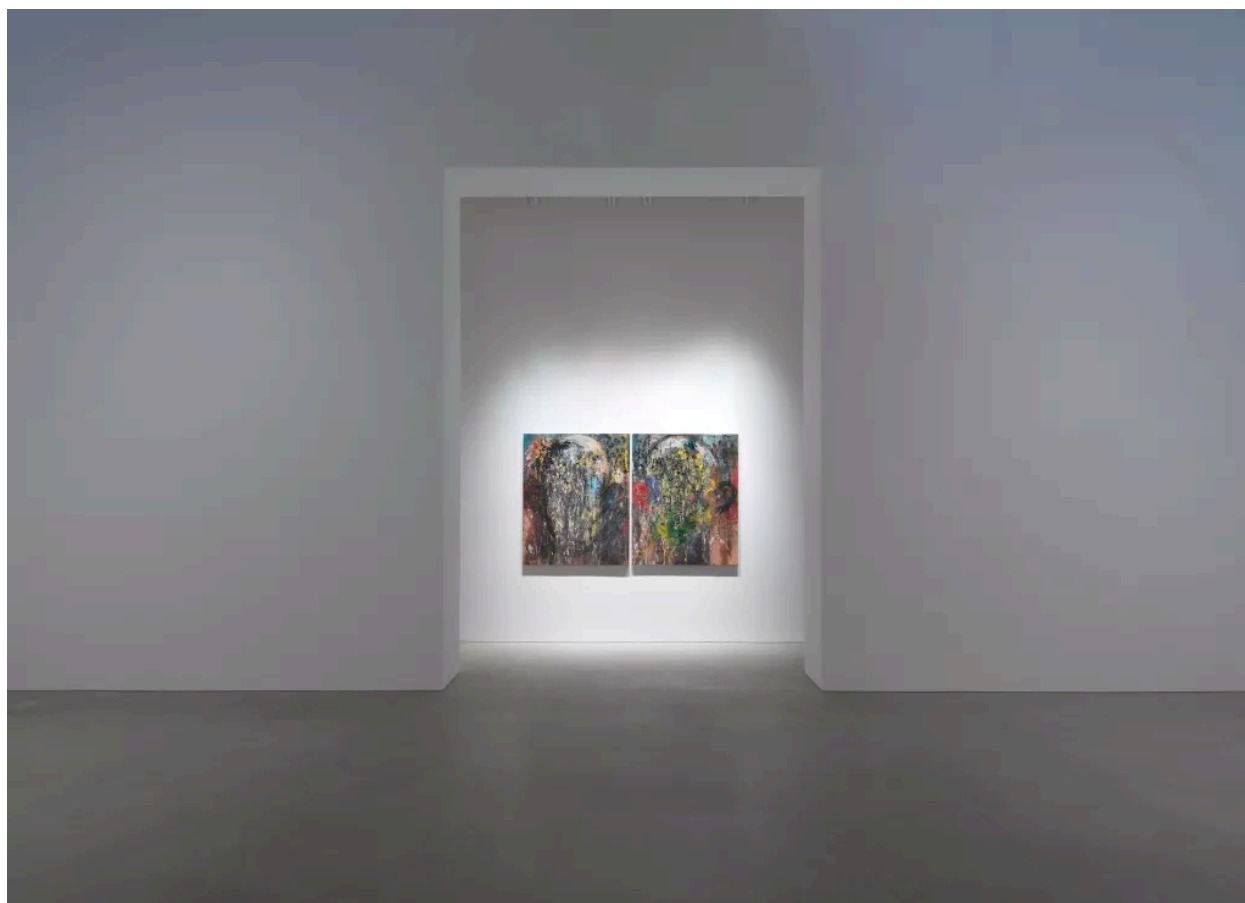


NEWCITY ART

Reviews, profiles and news about art in Chicago

The Wisdom of Age and the Courage of Youth

A Review of Jim Dine at Gray Warehouse



Jim Dine, Installation view of “Looking at the Present: Recent Works by Jim Dine” at Gray Warehouse, Spring 2017

One of the underlying themes in E.B. Sledge’s “With the Old Breed,” a gripping and graphic memoir of the Pacific Theater during World War II, is the implication that through traumatic experience one who is physically young could be made psychically old. Jim Dine’s “Looking at the Present” inaugurates the breathtakingly converted warehouse space of Richard Gray Gallery with an inversion of this premise. Here we encounter an artist that is unquestionably old —Dine is an octogenarian—but the experience of age has returned to him the courage of youth.

There's no *atelierstill* here. Dine's formally and materially wide-ranging oeuvre precludes a de Kooning-like insistence on paring back the visual essentials of a life's work. But Dine is grappling with age nonetheless. While he forgoes his signature use of hearts, bathrobes or hand tools, the artist is resoundingly present in these nine large-scale works. Animating the blistering scarified surfaces and full-throated reds are the contours of Dine himself: his head and his skull.



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Dine clearly revels in the luscious materiality of his medium in "A Constant Reminder of Age and Gender." Woven from a series of self-portraits that alternately cling to the sand-encrusted surface and then recede into a vaporous space, the work's all-over composition erupts with risky moments of painterly slather. In the hands of a less experienced painter these touches would easily veer into bad taste, but Dine's youthful enthusiasm is tempered by pregnant evocations of death. Whether in the guise of the omnipresent skull or the sanguineous hues that abound in Gray's basilica-like space, Dine implies life's transience throughout.

Over his long career, Dine has been most closely associated with the Pop-Art and Neo-Dada spasms of the 1960s, but the paintings in "Looking at the Present" are far more Milton Resnick

than they are Jasper Johns. It's tempting to speculate that this late-career efflorescence is due in part to an existential gravitas brought on by old age. There is undoubtedly a conceptual seriousness present that's lacking in a lot of Dine's more lighthearted work of the past. Formally, however, there is a playful assertiveness to these pictures that is at odds with this reading. It is as if through art, one can be made, if not immortal, at least young again.

(Alan Pocaro)



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Jim Dine shows through June 10 at Gray Warehouse, 2044 West Carroll.