

Putting My Affairs in Order

A Retrospective of Sorts by Ross Zirkle
at
The Art Depository

The idea of a retrospective never set well with local artist Ross Zirkle. That is though, until doctors told him that his life was about to end in a couple of months. Then the idea of sharing who he was and where his journey might be heading after his recovery seemed like a very good idea to Mr. Zirkle. His art work has to an extent, always been a personal visual diary. In hindsight, it even contained secrets from him. The older work illuminates where the newer work was coming from. The new work constantly references the older work, so why are they never or rarely shown together? It is as if the new work was created in a vacuum, which has never been the truth. When one views the work of Ross Zirkle there are some constants. There is almost always a figure, which is being addressed metaphorically by the language of the piece. The figure emerges from the layers of often contradicting information that he has layered upon his figures with. The postmodern area made this artist aware of the conflicting language systems that we use every day in our lives. Rather than the resulting confusion one would expect there are jumps of understanding and clarity concerning our human condition. Yes, we live in the cognitive statistical truths of science at the same time we live in the biological spiritual myths found in our bodies. His work revealed for some time in the visual texture these separate truths afforded in his prints.

This phase gradually gave way to Mr. Zirkle seeking a personal language to talk about the issues of mortality and infinity. He worked his figures with their own symbols that were at once decorative and ancient. This really slowed down production as art making became Mr. Zirkle's own personal meditation. Could it be he was already about the business of getting his spiritual house in order for his eminent departure? We like to believe this is so but it is also a much more universal calling for us all to consider our place in the mysteries of the infinite. Consumerism may have blinded us to the ultimate job at hand. Ross Zirkle's work however, is about readdressing the balance that is needed for all of us presently. Not just for him personally (because of his present circumstances) but for every single human being who will eventually face this unknown part of every life cycle. It must be done on their own personal terms. Mr. Zirkle's art is just his quest for his own truth. We suspect and hope that meditation upon this work will help others find their own individual paths.

Ross Zirkle is currently on a medical leave of absence from his responsibilities of teaching drawing and printmaking at the University of Kentucky. Last year he was promoted to Associate Professor and was awarded the University of Kentucky's Alumni Associations Teacher of the Year. He has presented his research into waterless lithography at over thirty national conferences and or workshops. His own personal work has been shown in over one hundred national juried shows in the last five years. He currently works in his studio apartment located in downtown Lexington.