Charles Bragg

Image:



Born: 1931
Known for: illustrator, surreal figure-genre painting arles Bragg portrays people, but he is not a figurative artist in the plastic sense in which California artists have come to be known.
Bragg's concerns start with the narrative, even anecdotal, and he has created a cast of characters who have lost their souls while acting out depravities through tragicomic burlesques of morality and ethics. Like a visual re-enactment of Gertrude Stein's wonderful tale, "I Know I'm a Queen Because I Wear a Crown," his half-ass generals embody their values in symbols of their acquisitiveness and vanity such as phony and ornate medallions.
Bragg's sinful universe is home to inept warmarkers frozen (clinically but not without humanity) as they plot, plan, scheme, pose, and rattle phallic sabres; they fumble and bristle beneath Prussian sashes and Edwardian haircuts while breathing heavily through forced smiles (psychosomatic asthma?).
Bragg's bittersweet people are pompous, voiceless, pious and cruel! They are completely believable, even lovable; yet they are deranged, pretentious deathmongers and benevolent despots with serious oral problems. They obviously overeat to compensate for a lack of normal gratification. To sum up, they are nice-looking, costumed 20th century cousins of Goya's Saturn devouring his son.
How dare Bragg make art of castrated cherubs as generals, or gaily-draped ritualistic hypocrites as clergymen! Who in hell does he think he is mirroring? It certainly doesn't look like what we think of as white Christian America!—or then again, does it? Holbein's skeletons dance once again with reincarnate joy!
Some viewers find so much to see in Bragg's work that one is apt to forget what one is looking at, that is—a work composed of lush, intuitive geometry modeled architectonically, using subtle renaissance form. Genteel fantasies are woven into a complexity of visual (image-idea) and psychological patterns in such a way that gestalt experience occurs surprisingly often.
Though his scale is intimate, Bragg's compositions are monumental enough to be translated verbatim into mural scale. But enough about the physicality of these works! The crux of the matter is

simply that these remarkably communicative expressions can be interpreted as going beyond storytelling into the real of affirming truth by exposing myths and lies! Mean old Charley pricks pins into pomposity, not people. He loves people, and his work transcends being merely narrative because his work basically expresses conditions and values, not itsy-bitsy genre situations. False prophets and soulless mythic heroes are on their way out and Charley Bragg is recording Act III for posterity.
charles bragg dies on January 9, 2017.

Country of origin:

United States

Life Span:

(1931 – January 9, 2017)

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