

A. Jain Marunouchi Gallery

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Castings The Sunbeam Collection in White

John Stutz

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By Valerie Gladstone

Artist John Stutz creates monumental works of enduring power. With their sensuous surfaces, rich colors and primal shapes, they grip the imagination with their beauty. A designer of formidable imagination, he developed a chemical process that ensures that his sculptures resist even the harshest weather conditions. This means that, unlike most art today, his pieces have unlimited life, a quality that only intensifies their artistic and emotional appeal. He wants them to enhance the lives of viewers and their surroundings. As testimony to his gifts, his works are collected worldwide, earning exhibitions in Europe, the United States, India, Turkey and Kuwait and soon, in Russia. In his splendid new show, he exhibits four large and twelve small shimmering white resin castings – as luminous as sky and water - as well as older pieces in a variety of colors. Seen together, they confirm his place as one the most important sculptors working today.

Collectors like businessman Sven Hotz have long bought Stutz's sculptures for their homes and offices, attracted by their imposing size and sensual colors and textures. Sepp Blatter, president of the International Football Federation, had three sculptures placed in the gardens surrounding the headquarters. Recently, three of his one-ton steel sculptures were installed in Paradeplatz, the main banking area in Zurich, a tribute to their wide appeal. Organic in their integrity, they require repeated viewing for full appreciation of their fierce beauty

Among the artists Stutz most admires are the American Robert Rymann and French Pierre Soulages. Best known for abstract, white-on-white paintings, Rymann calls himself a realist because he is not interested in creating illusions, but only in presenting materials at their face value. The abstract minimalist Soulages is known as the painter of black because of his obsession with the color. You see his relationship to their principals in his use of pure material and form.

Ironically, because his process is so new, critics consider him an emerging artist, as if he had invented a field entirely his own – which is true to some degree. Born and raised in Switzerland and a toolmaker and economist by profession, he began painting in oils and acrylics in 1963, having been inspired by a book on mixing colors. But conventional methods would never satisfy him. Fortunately, he became a student of the art professor Roland Mattes, who was responsible for art projects for the government of the Canton of St. Gall. Dr. Mattes helped him improve his technique, as he developed a special process of pouring colored, polyurethane resins, which are unavailable on the market, instead of using brushes and spatulas to apply paint. His goal was to design sculptures by burning out various forms of heavy steel plates, thus avoiding working with lightweight sheeting material.

"I always wanted to create rather heavy structures," Stutz says. "They seem more impressive to me, and are also more solid and durable in comparison to many other kinds of art. My designs and constructions represent my own ideas and inner feelings about contemporary life, new technologies, computer projections and open skies. It's important to me that they cannot easily be destroyed or damaged." Consequently, all his sculptures are quite solid and heavy, often requiring cranes for transportation and positioning at exhibitions and for final mounting.

In his studio, he can cast layers up to 3-5mm thick as well as alternate nine different colors during the pouring process, if he desires. To him, white represents God, black evil, and red attack. He sometimes combines these colors to produce a radiant gray. To create a work usually takes him a week, with each step needing time to set over night. All his castings consist of a wooden plate about ¾" thickness, surrounded by a border frame to prevent the liquid resins from flowing away and out of the picture. He then processes two component liquid polyurethane resins in a dosing, metering and mixing machine and with a flow gun casts onto the top of the wooden surface.

The cast resins cure over night at room temperatures, building a bubble free surface, which looks like metal enamel. They can also be affected by chemical additives to obtain a controlled, slightly foamed or decorative surface and texture. His specially designed machine allows the selection and changing of colors to take place during the pouring process, thus offering special casting and application potentials.

It is an arduous and intense process that requires enormous patience and finesse. But the results leave no question of the value of every, well-considered step. Whether creating stainless steel cubes, ten-foot tall abstract figures, wooden surfaces with intricate patterns or textured castings, Stutz infuses his works with vitality and character. You can't observe them casually. By the very nature of their remarkable composition, they draw you into their mystery, engulfing you with beauty.