

ARTS NEWS
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SIZE MATTERS: XXL and SIZE MATTERS: XS *An Exhibition of Wonderland Proportions at HVCCA*

By Cindy Beer Fouhy



Yan Pei-Ming, Self Portrait, 2007, Oil on canvas, 137.5 inches square,
Courtesy of David Zwirner Gallery (New York) and Galleria Massimo di Carlo (Milan)

'Curiouser and curiouser!' cries Alice, shrinking and growing in Wonderland's world of opposing sizes. Such might be a response of visitors to **SIZE MATTERS: XXL Recent Large Scale Paintings** and **SIZE MATTERS: XS – Recent Small Scale Paintings**, the exhibitions at Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art in Peekskill NY.

According to Curator and HVCCA Co- founder Marc Straus, "Each art work was selected because of its uniqueness and importance and as a means of demonstrating the significance of scale in painting. In "SIZE MATTERS" we examine the relationship of size and effectiveness. We see that some artists achieve enormous power in small paintings while others require the breath of large scale for full effect. This exhibit is ultimately about how we look at and evaluate painting."

For viewers of the exhibition, curiosity prevails. From the entrance of the museum, visitors are transported into one of a two-part exhibition investigating scale in contemporary painting. **Size Matter: XXL**, features monumental artworks from 31 artists from 9 different countries. By occupying nearly the entire visual field of the viewer, these paintings demand absorbed attention.

For example, upon entering the museum, visitors' senses are immediately engaged by the largest of the XXL exhibit -- French conceptual artist Daniel Buren's *Rising Cubes, bas-relief (blue)*, 2007 measuring 104 x 242.5 inches. Co-founder Livia Straus expresses her appreciation for this piece. "Dan Buren's work totally encompasses the viewer with the environment he creates."

Conversely, in the upstairs exhibition, the opposite focal consideration is required. **Size Matters: XS – Recent Small-Scale Paintings**, explores matters of the diminutive scale in contemporary painting. For this installment, HVCCA brings together a diverse group of international artists for whom working in minute proportions is an integral part of their respective practices. Abstraction, figuration, photo-realism, and caricature are just a few of the art historical genres being refreshed with new approaches by artists in the exhibition.

"With an average size of approximately one-foot square, these paintings attest to the fact that many artists are producing complex and unconventional statements that are enhanced rather than restricted by the tight confines of the picture plane," explains Brewer.

Featuring work produced within the last five years, the exhibition includes several artists, such as Thordis Adalsteinsdottir, Andrew Sendor, Aaron Johnson, Ridley Howard, and Skyler Brickley, offering new paintings specifically for *Size Matters*.

The smallest pieces in XS are both by Amy Bennett- *Doubling Over*, 2007 (oil on canvas) measuring 1.75 X 1.5" and *Against the Wall*, 2006 (oil on canvas) measuring 2 X 3.75" Each are examples of how the viewer may experience a kind of "voyeurism" - observing people through a distant window. Upon closer look, in addition to a broader visual narrative, the fine details of each room, including texture and shadow are revealed.

Issues of scale are currently prevalent. This past summer, the Neuberger Museum featured the floor to ceiling site-specific installation of Cleve Gray's Threnody Exhibition.

But it is naturally intriguing to present both sides of the dimension in one place. In selecting works of opposite dimensions, Brewer explains, "Large-scale works absorb the visual field. They are confrontationally aesthetic. The very small pieces are more about discovery – the fine details."

With possibilities for such diverse responses in one visit, how will viewers respond to the exhibition of minute and monumental proportions?

Brewer hopes that visitors to the exhibition experience changes as well. "I hope they come away with a better understanding of how, for contemporary artists, scale is almost a medium in itself. It provides a context for the way the artist approaches a subject matter and how the artist chooses to engage the viewer."

Though not intended to connect with this exhibit, as Folkert de Jong worked on his massive site-specific installation "Mount Maslow" during the Size Matters Exhibition, Brewer's hopes were realized. According to de Jong, "It was the perfect context and inspiration for my work at this time."

"Size Matters: XXL — Recent Large-Scale Paintings," through July 27, 2008, and "Size Matters: XS — Recent Small-Scale Paintings," through December 16, The Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, 1701 Main Street, Peekskill. Information: (914) 788-7166 or log onto: www.hvcca.org