

CALLING ALL *arts & culture* ADDICTS

"Creativity is a gift. It doesn't come through if the air is cluttered."

—John Lennon

CREATIVITY IS A GIFT, yes, but it's also a two-way street, and it needs an audience. To appreciate art is one thing, but to be *transformed* by it, that is an entirely different affair.

John Lennon said that for creativity to come through, the air needs to be free of clutter. Where could the air be any clearer than in the mountains—so what better place for creativity? That's the philosophy, at least, of Aspen Skiing Company and the Aspen Art Museum who partner to bring visitors and locals the *Art in*

Unexpected Places project.

It's easy to operate on auto-pilot. Get dressed, go to the mountain, give the man or woman behind the window your credit card for a lift ticket. In return, he or she hands you a work of art, a work of art that will also be your pass to ride the lift and ski for the day.

A moment like that will shake you out of your normal routine, and if you're open to it, the art might even transform you. Shift your perspective. Carve a memory. Create a conversation.

In this issue, we talk

to Mike Kaplan, CEO of Aspen Skiing Company, and Heidi Zuckerman, CEO and Director of the Aspen Art Museum, about why a ski company partnered with an art museum and infused art into their everyday business.

But first, we focus on Zachary Proctor, a Utah-born artist, who is, in many ways, of the mountains and definitely open to his gift of creativity. His work embodies the promise of mobility, the feats of masculinity, and the possibility of integrity.

"THE AIM OF EVERY ARTIST IS TO ARREST MOTION, WHICH IS LIFE, BY ARTIFICIAL MEANS AND HOLD IT FIXED SO THAT A HUNDRED YEARS LATER, WHEN A STRANGER LOOKS AT IT, IT MOVES AGAIN, SINCE IT IS LIFE."

—William Faulkner



ZACHARY PROCTOR

words by RYAN WATERFIELD

Painter Zachary Proctor and I stand in Terzian Galleries on Park City's historic Main Street, next to a few of his paintings, and talk movies. Wes Anderson. The Coen Brothers. "I love movies," he says. "Especially movies that have no clear temporal frame of reference. Movies that take place in their own time." These films have helped Proctor shape his vision, and his paintings exist on their own plane of time as well. I dig his movie references and understand that part of what drew me into his world was that sense of temporal dislocation.

ABOVE: Zachary Proctor, *Silence the Doubters*, oil on canvas, 40"x40".

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ABOVE: Zachary Proctor, *Answering the Call*, oil on canvas, 48"x72".

Proctor is bearded with a speck of gray here and there but really, I can't help think how young he is. Despite his youngish look and demeanor, his paintings evoke a sense of timelessness while being grounded in a pronounced historical reverence. Nostalgia takes center stage—but not a self-absorbed nostalgia; it's the sort of looking back that keeps one looking forward. A native of the Salt Lake City area, Proctor's family, memory, and fantasy all play a part in his work. "I want to paint paintings that ask us, 'Are we going to learn from the past?' My grandfather was an airplane mechanic in World War II. My other grandfather was a farmer in central Utah; all my ancestors walked across America as

Mormon pioneers," says Proctor. "So I'm using these moments, and focusing on what's good about us. Ultimately, I want to keep asking, why can't we learn from these moments and be more like that?" The "that" he refers to is multi-faceted, but always informed by integrity, wonder, and what it means to show up and work hard.

As we talk, Karen Terzian, the gallery owner and one of the first people to recognize Proctor's talent, says that she came to know about Proctor and his work in 2006 through her sister who is a nurse and works with Proctor's mother, who, like a good mom, hangs her son's paintings proudly in her office. Terzian offered him a spot in a two-man show early

in his career. **"THE PEOPLE TAKING AN INTEREST IN PROCTOR'S WORK NOW, AND EVEN EARLY ON, ARE," SAYS TERZIAN, "REAL COLLECTORS, VERY SOPHISTICATED WITH SUBSTANTIAL COLLECTIONS." AFTER HIS ORIGINAL SHOW AT TERZIAN, PROCTOR WENT BACK TO GRADUATE SCHOOL TO TEACH AND GET HIS MASTER'S DEGREE. TERZIAN SAYS, "WHEN HE CAME BACK AFTER HIS HIATUS, A COLLECTOR BOUGHT HIS FIRST PROCTOR PAINTING CALLED THE SUNDANCE KID. THAT**

PURCHASE TURNED INTO THREE OTHER PAINTINGS FOR THAT CLIENT. ONE THEY PURCHASED SIGHT UNSEEN. THEY KNEW, ONCE THEY SAW PROCTOR'S WORK, THAT HE WAS A PAINTER TO INVEST IN."

Proctor says he relates to William Faulkner's observation that an artist is really trying to arrest motion, which is life, and hold it fixed so that it can move again. We joke that my article about him could be called "Planes, Trains, and Automobiles," as many of Proctor's paintings center on motion of one form or another—men hopping into a boat in the midst of a cold, wintry scene; red race

at the center

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cars flying by; boys in coats and ties watching as the bravest of them leaps by on a dirt bike. Or, conversely, his paintings study the men who make the motion happen—the pit crews, the railroad workers, airplane mechanics.

THE MOTION THAT PROCTOR ARRESTS IS MANHOOD IN ACTION. TAKEN AS A COLLECTIVE, PROCTOR'S PAINTINGS ARE A STUDY IN IDEALIZED MASCULINITY, THE SORT OF MASCULINITY THAT YOUNG BOYS DREAM OF. THE MEN IN PROCTOR'S PAINTINGS WORK HARD, PLAY HARD, DEFY DOUBT, AND ARE EITHER

THE MAKERS OF ALL POTENTIALITIES OR THEY EMBODY THE POWER OF POTENTIAL.

Take his painting entitled *My Grandfather*. This painting offers an intersection of Proctor's reliance on his family history and his sense of a larger history. Proctor captures his grandfather in the days of his military service, perched on a military plane, fixing the prop. His attention is wholly on the work at hand. His posture is strong and that of a man in his element. The painting has a dreamy quality to it—fixed in an otherworldly blue—and has the markers of a time gone by, the uniform, the technology of the plane. You get the sense that

this is an origin painting of sorts for the artist. Proctor acknowledges this to a certain degree. "The fact that my grandfather served, and the work he did, does inspire so much of what I paint. It's part of my inheritance." The man working on the machine makes movement possible. He is a part of a whole, larger than himself, but integral to it.

Fast forward to Proctor's *Dwell in the Midst*, a painting more *Top Gun* than *Casablanca*. It's a painting divided into three fields. The foreground offers the mist or steam out of which a man rises. For the middle ground of the painting, Proctor paints this man in mid-action with his back to us, making him more of an everyman, but the

ABOVE: Zachary Proctor, *Bound to Cross the Line*, oil on canvas, 36" x 48".



ABOVE: Zachary Proctor, *Angels on our Shoulders*, oil on canvas, 48"x30".

sort of everyman who can direct traffic on a military airbase or aircraft carrier. The upper field of the painting is the machine, a military plane, of which we only see a very small part, but it looms large. The overall effect is a "man and the machine" duality. It's mythic on one hand but it is also grounded in realism. And that balance is key in the body of Proctor's work.

But his paintings are also about how boys become men. *Silence the Doubters* captures a group of boys standing around in coats and ties with very little of the formality that their garb would indicate. Instead, six boys stand amazed and expectant and a seventh boy flies above their heads on a red dirt bike. Proctor says this painting grew out of his own experiences as a young kid. "I was always sort of a short kid. In ninth grade, this one kid was teasing me, bullying me about being small. He bet me

that I couldn't touch the sprinklers overhead. What he didn't know was that I could jump pretty high. So I did, and I ended up tripping the sprinkler system at school and spent the next two weeks in detention. But it was worth it."

AND IN PROCTOR'S PAINTINGS, THE DOING IS THE IMPORTANT THING. "THERE'S A LOT OF MYTHOLOGY IN MY HEAD. WHETHER IT'S AMERICANA OR MORMON TEACHINGS OR WHAT IT MEANS TO GROW UP IN THE WEST AND TO BE A HARDWORKING HUMAN BEING. ALL OF THESE THINGS SORT OF SEEP OUT INTO MY WORK." And there's a certain Italian flare to some of his most recent work too—the red Italian racing cars that seem like they are from another time, but always the cars of any man's dreams—

no matter his age. The race car in action, just before the finish line as in his painting, *Bound to Cross the Line*, is potential incarnate. The dynamic of doer and observer is present in this work as well and the audience, just like the audience of boys in the *Silence the Doubters* painting, acts as witness to an achievement, something daring. And in the doing and the witnessing, there's something sacred.

One of his paintings, *Family Dinner*, was not originally meant to be for sale. Terzian saw it hang as part of his final art show at graduate school. When she had sold out of all of his other work and still had buyers interested, she asked him about the possibility of that one. The painting depicts Proctor's family gathered around the table for dinner; it's somewhat of a departure from his studies of movement and masculinity. Instead, it's a window into the interior world, the

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