



sid garrison

Sid Garrison's colored pencil drawings come into being through a process that he describes as a kind of "call and response" and sometimes even a "skirmish." Like playing a game of chess against oneself, Garrison makes a mark on the paper and then responds to it by combating or supplementing his last move. The result is alive at multiple levels, from the waxy surface to the complex organic abstractions fairly crackling with the energy of carefully balanced tension.

Even over the course of just one year, Garrison's drawings are remarkably varied. His forms, the weight of his lines, and the vivid palettes often change dramatically from one drawing to the next, but the heavily worked surface of these detailed abstractions, as well as their tendency to challenge the perceptual capacities of the viewer, unite even the most disparate works in Garrison's oeuvre.

One morning in February 2005, Garrison felt a tingling sensation in his face. His speech was impaired and he rapidly lost feeling in half of his body. He was rushed to the hospital where it was determined that he was having a stroke. He recalls, "I was terrified and exhausted, but conscious. By evening I couldn't speak." But during the middle of the night he awoke and discovered he could move his right hand and leg. Incredibly fortunate, he

was discharged from the hospital after only two days. After several weeks of physical and speech therapy, Garrison began to think about drawing again in April. He explains, "I wanted to get back to it with some degree of confidence; I didn't want to fail from the outset." By June he had three new drawings in a group show and was offered a solo exhibition at San Francisco's LIMN Gallery in November.

The drawings executed after his stroke call on a brilliant and diverse palette of vibrant, mostly primary and secondary colors, marking a significant departure from the subdued tones and restricted shapes often present in his previous work. "After the stroke," he says, "I didn't want to restrict myself unnecessarily; I still wanted to be disciplined in my practice, but also be free to create new work." In some ways the freedom of vision and perceptual awareness that Garrison achieved after the stroke had been building in his work for years.

He recalls, "That first year after the stroke I had to scramble some of my previous working methods. I decided I needed to have some kind of direction. I kept a notebook by the bed and wrote down ideas, sometimes verbal descriptions, sometimes sketches. Some people count sheep; I work through un-drawn drawings in my mind."

Garrison's drawing August 9, 2005 is an explosion of color, almost psychedelic in its profusion of contrasts between bright blasts and deep ragged tears of opaque black. "I remember when I was working on it, feeling relief in my brain. Just feeling free. I remember the sensation of release." Garrison is skilled at communicating such emotion in his drawings. While August 9, 2005 is turbulent and excessive, it is also celebratory, and its smooth surface is deeply satisfying. Garrison's labor-intensive, multilayered technique gives the drawings tangible depth but challenges the viewer to define his own point of focus. In a seeming acknowledgment of the limitations and imperfections of the human perceptual apparatus, Garrison's drawings encourage a relaxation of the gaze. Like a call and response of viewing, Garrison locates visual harmony somewhere between the sharp and undefined, between the real and imagined.

Sid Garrison is represented in San Francisco by LIMN Gallery, 292 Townsend, S.F.
(415) 977-1300 or www.limn.com

Top Image:
March 14, 2007
38"x28"
Color pencil / paper
Photo: Courtesy of Limn Gallery

Aug 2007 by kim beil