

DANIEL RANALLI: CHALKBOARDSGallery Kayafas • Boston, MA • www.gallerykayafas.com

Daniel Ranalli's inkjet prints at first seem to have a cool, detached air. They're largely symmetrical (or asymmetrical in a balanced way), and big for color photographs. The colors are earth tones with some subdued blues, and the color swatches seem organized into geometric grids with a painterly quality, recalling work of color field artists.

Like a lot of landscape-based abstractions, most of Ranalli's photos feature a horizon line (in the sense of a Mark Rothko composition). But all that cool left-brain order is just the frame. Because what all those squares and rectangles and trapezoids contain is hardly orderly at all.

Ranalli is a college professor, and while wandering around the empty campus classrooms, he was struck by the vibrancy and distinctiveness of the chalkboards. Never completely erased, often holding fugitive traces, they possess the remnants of learning and teaching.

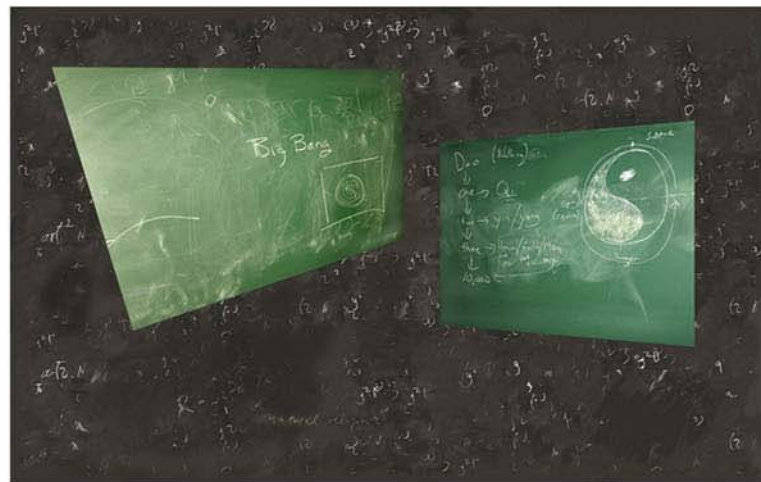
The subject matter, once one starts to discern it, is varied. The chalky marks are like a meshy texture from a distance, glinting veils over the

simple, harmonious color scheme. But move closer and phrases emerge, a snatch of Spanish in *This That*, Asian calligraphy, Arabic and English in others. *Se-x* shows formulae, the letters referring to math, not biology. Similar word games are played in *Sin*, which uses charts and graphs to explore signs as well as cosines.

In *Big Bang-Yin Yang*, two trapezoids in blue hold symbols both spiritual and spiral, maps of spinning stars; the black void around them is full of silvery flecks. What emerges most of all is the individualistic nature of the hand-drawn gestures. Whether teaching English or evolution, physics or geometry, these teachers have individual quirks and characteristic styles. Ranalli reveals the human nature of this vibrant endeavor. He shows that the blackboard is a thin film, a liminal arena where information, preciously guarded, is carefully transmitted from skilled practitioners to willing, attuned audiences.

There's science in Ranalli's art as well—the science of instruction, of one kind of teacher recognizing the artistry of his colleagues, no matter what the field. Ranalli has altered his photos with computer software to create these collages, giving a semblance of order and elegance to a readymade world of otherwise unrelated imagery.

—Shawn Hill

Daniel Ranalli, *Big Bang-Yin Yang*, archival inkjet print, 22 x 34" © Daniel Ranalli.