

Reference In Support Of Farrell Brickhouse's Guggenheim Fellowship

I have known Farrell Brickhouse's work since 1989. If there was ever a poet/painter it is he. A storyteller by nature he uses not ink, not type, not cursive to spin his yarns but paint, thick, viscous oil, smacking of color of darks, of lights and even glitter that sparkles on the canvas but also in his eyes. For it is what is in his eyes, what is in his heart, what is in his mind that becomes the story. It is also the paint as material that he innately understands, and loves that helps him tell the story of paint and what it can do in the right hands. Brickhouse understands this and embraces it; if the message is the medium, it has no better messenger than Farrell Brickhouse. His figures are mere swipes of the palette knife or brush in a field of dark brightened by thick white dabs, supine gazing upwards, or figures floating, upside down, hanging from the stars in the heavens, and in such a minimum succinct language, one of universal signs writ large; a maximum story, that of the human, what it is to be, to dream, to ache, to grieve, to be grateful, all of our emotions, our history back to Homer, to Virgil and Dante and yes to the symbols of the Lascaux caves. All are part of his unique encyclopedia, a pictorial intelligence. His feeling for what it is to be human, his understanding of our condition and his empathy for our world comes through in his pictures. In his telling of Sisyphus a luminous undefined figure composed of thick pinkish white marks sits like a lump of wasted paint next to a clumpish mass of browns, greens, blues, and blacks—again like paint waste, an amalgam of weighted globs on the palette board. But yet

a thick oozed white tendril of arm is stretched towards the clump, a sensuous prosthetic, it's body leaning on the clumpish rock not in combat, not in competition, but knowing that both are tied together for an eternity. This then is their lot, rock and man or Earth and humanity. This metaphysical poetry, this empathy is threaded through Brickhouse's body of work. What Homer, Virgil, Cervantes and Shakespeare writ in words he has portrayed in paint, direct, not mannered, not polished but rough, sensuous, bloody visceral marks like flesh itself, something to bite into, sink your teeth and most definitely your eyes and heart into; to behold his work is to behold our history. And this history is told on an intimate scale, maybe a foot square and this is important. He does not preach to us, does not scream at us, no bravado here but he tells us stories as if it is late at night a few friends around a campfire. His pictures whispered to us like we are the only ones he is speaking too, a warmth and heat from fire to man shared between us like a pact between us, though it reverberates through ten thousand years. Literally the pictures are of an intimate scale, almost icon-like without the nonsense of worship, of fetishizing the picture or the paint itself. Again he loves paint but understands its function is to tell a story, that of the human condition, and yes, the material itself. No one does it better than Farrell Brickhouse. He has a unique voice, a message of clarity and the language of physical poetry, of thought, that of paint— a pictorial intelligence and for this reason you should bestow your grant to Farrell Brickhouse. He deserves it.

Sincerely,

David Simons.