

# LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP

JOHN RUNYON OF RUNYON FINE ARTS TAPPED L.A. ARTIST ANTHONY PEARSON FOR THE SITE-SPECIFIC INSTALLATION AT ESPA AT THE JOULE.

On a summer visit to Dallas, Los Angeles-based artist Anthony Pearson tells me he's "a sculptor trapped in a photographer's body." Trained as a photographer in the 1990's, his work is now highly advanced, featuring black-and-white photographs of his own gestural paintings on aluminum he refers to as "solarizations," created through manipulation in his dark room where tonality is often reversed through flashing areas with light.

From his European exhibits in Brussels, London, and Milan to shows in Chicago, New York, and Miami, one thing is certain: Pearson's work, in all media, harnesses that photographic interplay of positive and negative.

An extensive display of Pearson's work now dwells at ESPA at The Joule, commissioned by John Runyon, the highly sought contemporary art advisor who curated the entire collection for the hotel. "I wanted his vocabulary and that's all I said," describes Runyon of when he gave Pearson the plans for ESPA designed by Adam Tihany. However, Runyon's genius lies in choosing Anthony Pearson in the first place. "Anthony has this perfect volume with enough diversity to fill the 15 spaces (of the two-story spa)," Runyon explains.

ESPA is a global spa leader that combines the design and management of prestigious spas across five continents with its own branded natural products. Incidentally, the artist had not been to ESPA until the week I met him. Informed by a long-distance relationship with Runyon, Pearson's visual acuity is clearly so heightened he was able to put forward artworks for each area of the spa.

In keeping with the extensive collection of art throughout the au courant hotel, Anthony says: "I love site-specific design." With a geothermal-inspired spa, guests enjoy an environment featuring the latest European heat experiences in the subterranean level

where saunas, steam rooms, a unisex vitality pool, and treatment rooms combine with Tihany's design elements of crystal, minerals, fiber optic lighting, metal, and gracious fabrics. So, for this project there was plenty of opportunity for Pearson to flex his uniquely diverse manipulations of preferred materials while remaining homogenized in his interpretation.

"I'm very interested in putting my artwork into the site. My artwork has a lot of continuity. It doesn't have a lot of color. I have a very tight language. If we can tell the whole story in one space then we have a whole dialogue," discloses Pearson.

The ESPA lobby area showcases five of the artist's solarized gelatin photographs, though Pearson's vocabulary has many narratives beyond photography like his "Plaster Positives" created by hand-pouring Hydrocal plaster, without touching it, to form abstract lava-like abstractions. A study in chemical alchemy with their silver nitrate (the chemical used to make mirrors) or cobalt patinas, his bronze relief "Tablets" recall the artist's photographic roots. Yet it is the interdependence of all the artworks, and the way he manipulates his source materials that make them contemplative in their iterations narrating the cadence of the collection as a whole.

Of his visit to Dallas, Pearson says: "Dallas has a long tradition of placing artwork in public spaces, the NorthPark Center being the important early example. The artists and artwork at NorthPark are very impressive. The presence of art in public places is really important in here. An example I have never heard of is a city that has fine art at its football stadium! I was considering this history in doing my work at The Joule."

Ready to book your day at ESPA at The Joule and view the Pearson collection? I'm told Thursday through Saturday is best to avoid the crowd. **P**

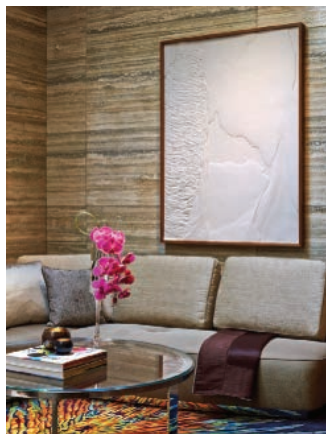
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**CONTEMPORARIES**

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Clockwise from top left: Near the subterranean unisex vitality pool: Anthony Pearson, *Untitled* (Three Freestanding Pour Sculptures), 2012, bronze sculptures, 68 x 37.5 x 4 in. each. In the ESPA at The Joule lobby: Anthony Pearson, *Untitled* (Suite of Five Solarized Prints), 2012, solarized silver gelatin photographs in artist's frames, 17.5 x 13.25 x .75 in. each. Artist Anthony Pearson in his Los Angeles studio. Anthony Pearson, *Untitled* (Plaster Positive), 2012, hydrocal and oiled Claro walnut, 59.75 x 43.75 x 3.5 in.