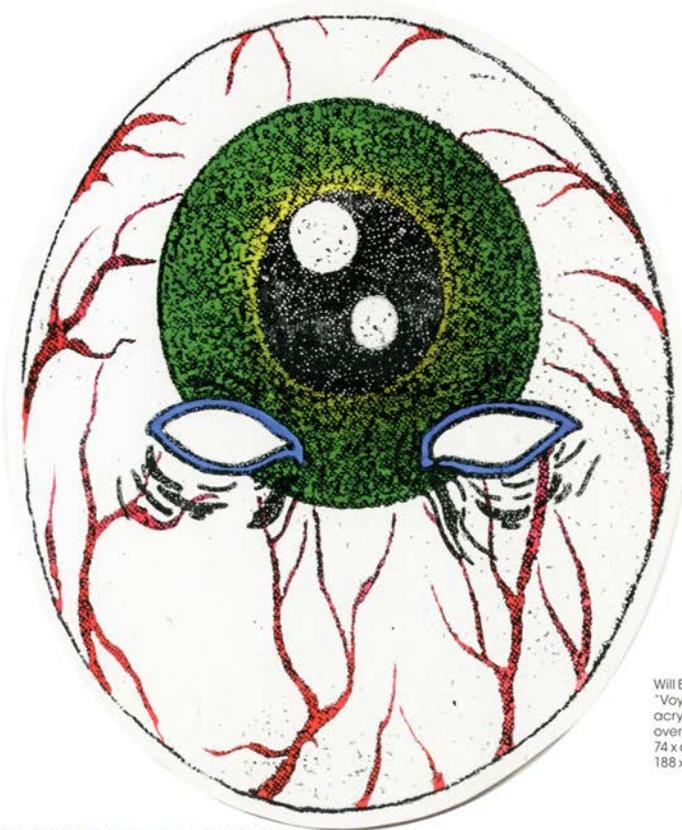


BLOUINmodernpainters

TRANSCENDING RE-APPROPRIATION

THE AMERICAN
ARTIST WILL BOONE
TALKS ABOUT THE
IMPULSES AND
INFLUENCES THAT
SHAPE HIS
CATEGORY-BUSTING
BODY OF WORK

BY CODY DELISTRATY



Will Boone,
"Voyeur," 2018,
acrylic on canvas
over wood panel,
74 x 60 3/4 x 1 1/4 in./
188 x 154.3 x 3.2 cm.



Will Boone,
"Detail of 'Voyeur,'" 2018,
acrylic on canvas
over wood panel,
74 x 60 3/4 x 1 1/4 in. /
188 x 154.3 x 3.2 cm.

BOTH PICS. PHOTOGRAPHY: JEFF MCCLANE. COURTESY OF DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY, LOS ANGELES, CA

Will Boone is insatiably curious, mixing together memories from his skateboarding youth, symbols of punk rock music, horror films, cattle ranching, even the tribal masks he fell in love with as a young man on strolls through the Menil Collection in Houston — all in order to make radically original art. Born in Houston and now living in Los Angeles, the 36-year-old's new exhibition at the Galerie Patrick Seguin in Paris will be his first solo show in France and will also be on show at the capital's principle art festival, FIAC, October 18-21.

He'll display mostly his so-called "masks," mixtures of sculpture and painting that question and undermine typical semantic associations, from stereotypes of Americana to expectations of indigenous peoples.

Boone spoke to *Modern Painters* about transcending re-appropriation, the meaning of Americana in the current political climate (and his hatred of the term), and what it means to be successful as an artist. The interview has been edited for length.

CD: You seem to have a particularly wide range of artistic interests. What binds it all together?

WB: Well I always start with things that I'm interested in personally. It's stuff that I come across in my life naturally. A lot of things I'm thinking about, I feel like I know that they're significant, and I'm trying to understand why.

Can you give an example?

Being an artist is sort of like if you have a flashlight and you're in a big

Will Boone, "Security," 2018, acrylic on canvas over wood panel, 74 x 78 1/2 x 1 1/4 in./ 188 x 199.4 x 3.2 cm.



dark cave, and the cave's full of stuff and your job is to shine your flashlight on things so that people can see them. In this way — in the way that someone who's a musician could write a song about something that is very ordinary or banal and the song can make it significant, or the song can make you think about it in a different way, or people can create their own relationships to it — it has this availability as this other thing to them.

Tell me then a little bit about this show in Paris. What's your goal with this exhibit?

Well, there are masks. And these are more like paintings. This body of work I've been working on for so many years, and I wanted to really maximize them and push them and show them in this show in Paris. And so I increased their size, and there's more color to them; they felt very graphic and flat before, and I started to use an airbrush in little areas to paint them.

Then there is also this emblem that I've been working with in two-dimensional work, and I built a three-dimensional version of it. It's the Chevrolet logo as three sculptures. I like to cross-pollinate

things, taking things from my paintings and bringing them into my sculpture or taking things from my sculpture and bringing them into my paintings.

There's a core sense of Americana in your work — the Chevy logo, the cattle brand. How, if at all, does your work dialogue with the contemporary American political discourse?

I don't know — I hate that word, 'Americana.' I don't know why. I think it sounds goofy. I feel like I work with material that I'm familiar with, and there's no real choice to be like, 'I'm going to work with American things,' and I think it's mainly because I spent the first 27 years of my life in Houston, and then I left and I didn't leave the States, really, until I was in my 30s so the things I've been interested in have always been fairly close to me. It's what I think about and what I see and what I want to investigate and talk about in my work.

Will Boone, "Bad Milk," 2018, acrylic on canvas over wood panel, 74 x 45 x 1 1/4 in./ 188 x 114.3 x 3.2 cm.

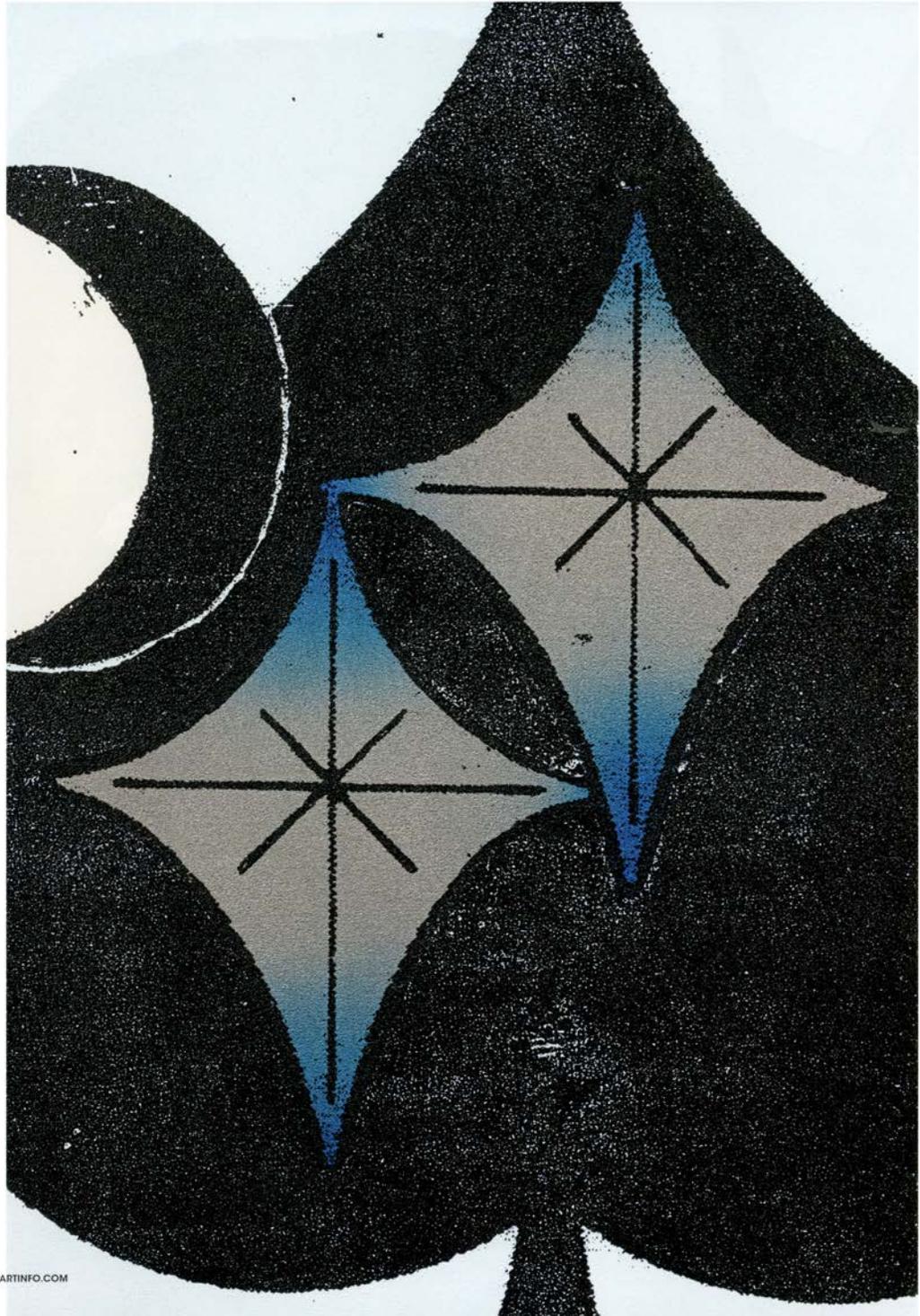




Will Boone.
"Freak." 2018.
acrylic on canvas
over wood panel,
73 x 48 1/4 x 1 1/4 in./
185.4 x 122.6 x 3.2 cm.

PHOTOGRAPHY: JEFF MCLANE COURTESY OF DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY, LOS ANGELES, CA

Will Boone,
"Ace," 2018,
acrylic on
canvas over
wood panel.



PHOTOGRAPHY: JEFF MCLANE COURTESY OF DAVID JORDANSKY GALLERY, LOS ANGELES, CA

But your work does seem to actively dialogue with specific archetypes, or perhaps stereotypes, of the American psyche...

Yeah, with the mask paintings I started off examining the archetypes that are in masks and in appropriation and looking at Halloween masks and tribal masks and stuff like that. When I would go to a museum to see a mask — they have a lot of masks at the Menil Collection in Houston; then, when I lived in New York for a little while, I would go to the Met on Friday nights, when it's open late — and I couldn't stop thinking about them, and whenever I can't stop thinking about something, I start to think about, how can it work its way into my work, or how can I make work about this thing? So I started working with these sorts of archetypes and appropriating things, and then where they kind of ended up was turning these things into masks. For instance, I made a mask out of an ace of spades playing card, and the work explored what that means because an ace can either be a high card or it can be a low card. Ace of spades is also called the death card. In Vietnam, US soldiers would put it in the mouths of dead Vietcong soldiers. So it just became about asking, what can these things become?

So you're able to transcend mere reappropriation since you're searching for and finding new semantics or significances to these objects?

Yeah, I think so. But there's also just a playfulness to it. Making masks out of stuff — it's a fun thing to do. That's what I did when I was a kid. I don't always really know what I'm doing, and sometimes I can figure it out, and sometimes I can't. But I just try to stay close to making my work.

When do you know when it's working?



Will Boone, "Ace," 2018, acrylic on canvas over wood panel.

That's certainly a tough question. It's a combination of things. A lot of times, I jump from thing to thing. A lot of times I'll find a material, or I'll see something and I'll want to make it an artwork using it, so I'll bring a material into my studio and try to learn how to use it, like an airbrush. So sometimes there's this challenge of just using the material, and then there's making it into artwork. If I'm unhappy with something, I destroy it kind of quickly. I feel if it's really meant to be, it will come back out in later works. It's really like, if you can make the thing, and the thing feels independent of you — and I don't matter, and it's not like a painting by Will Boone, or whatever — and it has its own identity, its own life. And then it leaves, and I don't have

anything to do with it anymore — only that I made it. That's when my art is a success.

For instance?

I made a piece that was out in the desert — basically this bomb shelter that had a sculpture inside of it. It was just on the side of the road, so people became curious about what the hell this thing was and people would pull over and go and look at it, go down in there. They took their picture in there or whatever, and it wasn't art to them; it was just this thing, this thing they were experiencing, and they didn't know about who I was. They didn't care about me. And that was kind of the most successful I've ever felt as an artist.MP