

Charles Platt, Artist

Artist Charles A. Platt is a noted architect based out of New York City, who has received many meritorious awards in the field since receiving his architectural degree from Harvard. It comes as no surprise that in his fine art collages Platt “builds” his pieces. Even though the works are wall pieces and technically considered two-dimensional, they are made up of items that once were—and mostly still are—three-dimensional. An architect is in the business of making three-dimensional objects out of two-dimensional materials. In Platt’s collages, he does the opposite, literally deconstructing objects that found their way into his studio until they are nearly unrecognizable in their abstracted states.

I take apart clothes and find and re-work used objects – shoes and shirts, phonograph records, summer skirts, measuring tapes and rifle targets, tennis nets, wallets and so forth – and work them into compositions that depend on formal artistic expression and meaning. The nature of the object itself, the material, its color, texture, shape, construction and the associations it evokes play a central role, as do the possibilities of its history.

In much of his work Platt seeks to splay open items in a way that reveals a story; however, that narrative, although enticing, is not necessary to the visual enjoyment of the work. The expertly planned compositions, the juxtaposition of texture, color and pattern are what set Platt’s work apart, along with their grand scale and the complexities that present themselves the longer one looks. The huge size is dictated primarily by the fact that most of the items included are human scale, and most all of the objects relate in some way to human beings.

It gradually dawns on the viewer just how personal these abstract pieces are, made up of remnants of a life laid bare for all to scrutinize, and while a first glance brings a smile, further study brings a heartbeat and the understanding that there are no certain answers here. The artist tells his stories matter-of-factly, and the viewer slowly realizes that it is not at all clear whether this is a pleasant accounting or a traumatic tale.

One thing does become quickly certain: that the objects within these pieces were once a part of a life, the clothes and shoes protected a body, as did the cut-apart safety vest. The tennis net was no doubt slammed by thousands of errant balls, and the silk stockings caressed a woman’s leg. The mouse trap used as an executioner’s aid has been promoted to an artist’s medium, and the dog tags once hung around a neck—the artist’s in fact. Some art is just beautiful to look at, some is provocative, some historic, some daring. Platt’s work is simultaneously accomplished, visually dramatic and quietly unnerving—a distinct combination for survival.

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