

Related Events:

All events are free and open to the public.

Artist's reception:

Sunday, November 21, 3 - 5 pm

Talk with the Artist:

Sunday, January 30, 3pm

About the Artist

Kim Piotrowski has been actively exhibiting her paintings and drawings since 1991. She is a recipient of the 2008 Artadia Grant for artists and has participated in the residency programs at Ragdale (IL) and Ox Bow (MI). In Chicago, her work has been the subject of several solo exhibitions at art venues such as The Union League Club, Skestos Gabriele Gallery and 65 Grand, and Stux Gallery in New York. She currently lives and works in Riverside, IL. For more information on past works, visit **www.kimpiotrowski.net**, not to be confused with another artist by the same name based in New York.

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

5020 South Cornell Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60615 773.324.5520 www.hydeparkart.org

The Hyde Park Art Center is a not-for-profit organization that presents innovative exhibitions, primarily work by Chicago-area artists, and educational programs in the visual arts for children and adults of diverse backgrounds. The Center is funded in part by 3Arts, Alphawood Foundation; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council; Harper Court Arts Council; The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; The Leo S. Guthman Fund; The Irving Harris Foundation; Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; JPMorgan Chase Foundation; The Mayer & Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; The MacArthur Foundation; The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; The Orbit Fund; Polk Bros. Foundation; The Clinton Family Fund; The Wallace Foundation; and the generosity of its members and friends.

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

Gallery 4

October 17, 2010-January 30, 2011

Kim Piotrowski: *Beds and Guns*



Pillow Road, 2010,
Acrylic ink, flashe, gouache, gold leaf on synthetic paper
60 x 96 inches

The provocative title for the exhibition *Beds and Guns* originated informally between artist and curator but stuck in a powerful way. The two thematic series of paintings of beds and paintings of guns were made by Kim Piotrowski over the past year with separate intentions. Yet, when the work is seen side by side, the two symbols have more in common than just a sensational name for a title and open up the paintings to surprising interpretations.

Guns first appeared in Piotrowski's drawings and paintings in 2005 as an automatic response to the Iraq war. The summer of 2010 in Chicago brought an increase in violence and the Supreme Court's overturn of Mayor Daley's strict gun law. This proliferation of guns and the ease of which to obtain them, as well as the random acts they permit, pushed Piotrowski to focus on a gun-related series starting with *Lakeside Arsenal*. According to the artist, "sources for the gun paintings aren't specific but are a culmination from looking at guns on Ebay or gun aficionado blogs; or it might be from handling an old revolver at an antique shop or reading the local news." The current gun paintings offer a more personal confrontation with violence on behalf of the artist. All of the guns in these paintings point to the left, which references Piotrowski's right-handedness and places her behind the barrel. "When you have a gun in your hand you are making a choice and things immediately change," stated Piotrowski. The gun paintings address the abuse of power and the extreme control over another that firearms cause.

The bed is astutely identified by Piotrowski as a place where life is conceived, dreams take root, and last days spent. Often thought of as a space for comfort and rest, it's also the place where the mind is most active and constantly turning. Swirls and plumes of oranges, blues, maroons, and pinks hover over the bed or spout from the pillows envisioning the rampant activity produced in bed. Pillow Road was the first painting in the bed series. Piotrowski attempted to make a painting of a larger-than-life-size king bed. To create the eight foot-long uninter-

rupted deep brown and pink stripes gliding across the paper in the desired width, the artist taped several paint brushes together. Solid horizontal bands of paint define this work and show the influence of the abstract painting by Mark Rothko as well as the orgasmic paint splatters of Jackson Pollack. Satisfied with the energy and sheer weight she was able to achieve in the large size, Piotrowski continued to make three more just as big: *Love in Plasma*, *In the Evening* and *Night Beat*.

Several of the larger works were produced during the artist's extremely productive participation in the residency program at the Ragdale Foundation in Lake Forest (IL). While there for two weeks, Piotrowski was given a large studio space and could experiment with size as well as dedicate all of her time towards developing sketches for the works realized – a luxury for an artist who is also a wife and mother of two young girls. This program offers a prairie retreat for artists, musicians and writers to make work with no obligations or deadlines to sell or exhibit the work.



Night Beat, 2010, acrylic ink and flashe on synthetic paper, 84 x 60 inches

Fortunately, Piotrowski was able to have the HPAC show in mind and successfully execute her first work made in a series and made in a format this large.

Piotrowski's medium-of-choice is untraditional in that she employs materials that are typically used for making flat commercial signs to make elaborate textured paintings. The combination of acrylic ink, flashe (vinyl paint), enamel (paint) pens, permanent markers, and Yupo, a synthetic polypropylene paper, enable her to make quick fluid gestures and achieve motion or vibrations in her work. This result is surprising since the materials have a "painfully slow" drying time for the artist, causing her to wait to apply the next layer of paint. Much of the ink and gouache (which is an opaque watercolor) is put on while the paper is horizontal allowing the pigment to pool and create interesting patterns. Piotrowski paints while the paper is both on the wall and floor or table to produce these different visual effects.

When Piotrowski does incorporate fine art materials like gold or silver leaf, she applies them in unexpected ways. Gold leaf is typically used in small doses to provide ornate decoration to pattern. Piotrowski uses it to fill large forms to reveal a truth to the object's material, like metal for a gun, or the luxury of a gold satin pillow. The range and variation in the textures, finishes, and marks she is able to obtain in paint is extraordinary and suggests techniques normally achieved from other art disciplines such as photography and printmaking. Except for one or two instances of collage (*Forever Blue* and *In the Fold*), and air brushing (*Night Beat*), all of the works in this show are entirely painted by hand without any tricks or apparatuses.

This is not to say that Piotrowski's paintings disregard technology. Much of the artist's research for source images comes from the internet. She reads the newspapers online, samples videos on YouTube, and visits other popular culture media sites daily for images. Even her painting process incorporates digital technology. While she makes a painting, she takes digital photographs of her work in progress. Then she prints out the images and tests out her next step manually on the print-outs before applying the strokes directly onto the painting. From research to the execution of the work, the digital image influences the content, composition, and style of mark Piotrowski paints.

Through her artwork, Kim Piotrowski is able to make tangible the intangible shared qualities of human experience – love, life, sickness and death – without any direct representation of the human figure. The most recent work is concentrated on symbols that implicate the human body in their use, causing the viewer to draw personal connections to the objects. By abstracting objects and people into lush and seductive colors, textures, and dark lines, Piotrowski accurately describes the impact we have on one another through the many amorphous relationships we find ourselves in both consciously and through chance encounters.



Lakeside Arsenal, 2010, acrylic ink, flashe, conté crayon on synthetic paper, 40 x 26 inches