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Matt Sesow Solo show at Rebus Works (Raleigh, NC)

work done during Opera Company of North Carolina's production of "Don Giovanni"
(press release below) **October 2006**


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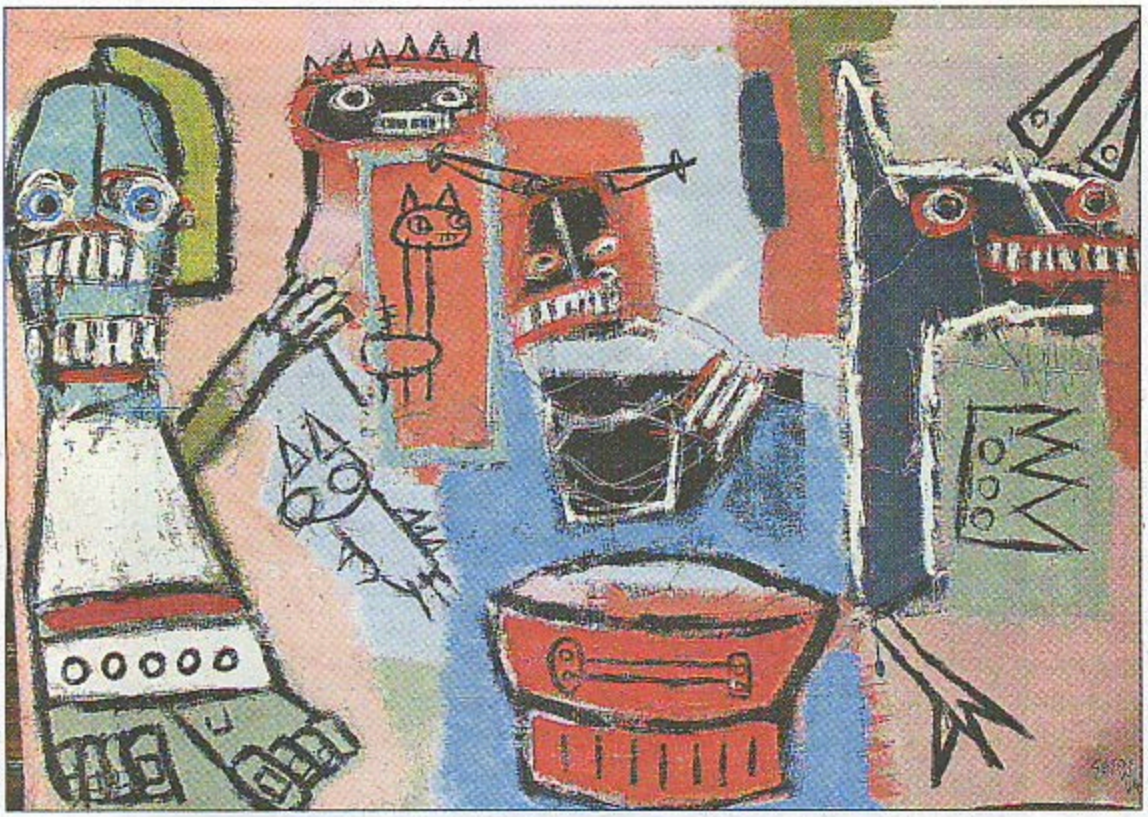

Matt Sesow painted 'Adorned' using acrylics and house paint on canvas, live during the Opera Company of North Carolina's October production of 'Don Giovanni.'

You read about his painting-to-live-opera during last month's production of "Don Giovanni." Now see the results of **Matt Sesow's** collaboration with the Opera Company of North Carolina.

Tonight during First Friday, Sesow will open an exhibit of the art at Rebus Works off Boylan Avenue. He painted the massive canvases – up to 12 feet wide – on stage during the performance and in the lobby. Sesow will also give a gallery talk at 4 p.m. Saturday.

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Sesow's works, including 'Devotion,' are at Rebus Works through Nov. 30.

The paintings are in Sesow's signature style: gestural, primally abstract and potently colored. He's frequently called "an outsider artist," meaning he's not academically trained and favors expressionism over realism.

Does the label fit? Sesow, once a darling of the "outsider art" world, has plenty to say about it.

"To me it seems that 'outsider art' is a term invented by people who will profit from it," Sesow said in an interview prior to the "Don Giovanni" performances.

For one thing, it's not much of a movement, he argues. He also became uncomfortable that he, a college-educated technology professional who took up painting, might be portrayed as a victim to sell art. Sesow lost one arm as a child in a plane

accident, and his painting at first focused on the trauma. But, Sesow said, he didn't want to be defined by his injury anymore.

A few years ago, Sesow decided to give up his gallery agent and sell his own work on the Web at almost ludicrously low prices by art standards. (Very small paintings can be had for $35, including shipping.)

Sesow's show is a great excuse to get out to the hinterlands of First Friday. The event is clustered around Artspace and downtown Raleigh, but there are plenty of art galleries and studios in Glenwood South and Boylan Heights, too.

Rebus Works Press Release (November. 2006)

Matt Sesow



Friday November 3rd, 2006

Rebus Works will feature paintings by artist Matt Sesow for the month of November. This work was created for and during The Opera Company of North Carolina's production of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. The opening reception will take on place on Friday, November 3rd as part of First Friday. Sesow will be present from 6-10 pm and will give an artist lecture Saturday, November 4th at 4 p.m. with a question and answer period to follow.

For this particular body of work Sesow was approached by Founder and Artistic Director Robert Galbraith of OCNC to be a part of the performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Sesow painted five set backdrops in a day and half. He also painted one 12-foot-by-7-foot canvas during the audience sitting before the performance, and during the 20 minute intermission he completed another large canvas for each night of the two night production. Sesow also donated two canvases to the OCNC for their annual auction. "I let them choose which two they wanted and they picked *Reality Theater* and *Hunted*." They will be available from the OCNC at a future auction.

Sesow, an ex-computer programmer who started painting in 1994 to impress a girl, fell in love with painting and has been obsessed with it since. Sesow is truly an inspiring and prolific artist creating works that are raw and intensely expressive. He uses bold paint colors and hard lines that are visually commanding. Sesow's paintings often have a language within themselves using symbols to describe an idea or feeling such as a bunny signifying innocence.

Sesow's involvement with "Don Giovanni" is not his first foray into the performing arts. In 2003, he created six large canvas paintings that were used as backdrop and inspiration for a month-long performance celebrating the life and accomplishments of Alfred Kinsey at the "Theatre of Note" in Hollywood. Read more about the show.

Also, in 2005 he was asked by a theater company in Phoenix to create a large canvas expressing his thoughts on the Iraq War. The painting was used as the inspirational foundation by ten playwrights. They each wrote plays relating to and reacting to my painting "Collateral Damage" (8' x 9' on canvas). Then during the month of April 2005, the plays were performed in front of the large painting which also acted as a backdrop.

View the painting at: http://www.sesow.com/paintings/jan2k5/hell.jpg
Read some press on it at: http://sesow.com/cdpressrelease.htm

In September of this year Sesow received a letter from the nominating committee for the 2006 Wynn Newhouse Award. It is a $50,000 prize to be awarded each year "to an artist of excellence who also has a disability". It is a nomination-only award, so he was pleasantly surprised to be contacted by the judges. He should know by the end of November if he has been selected as a finalist.

Opening Reception:
Friday November 3, 6-10pm (as part of First Friday)

Lecture:
Saturday November 4 @ 4pm

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