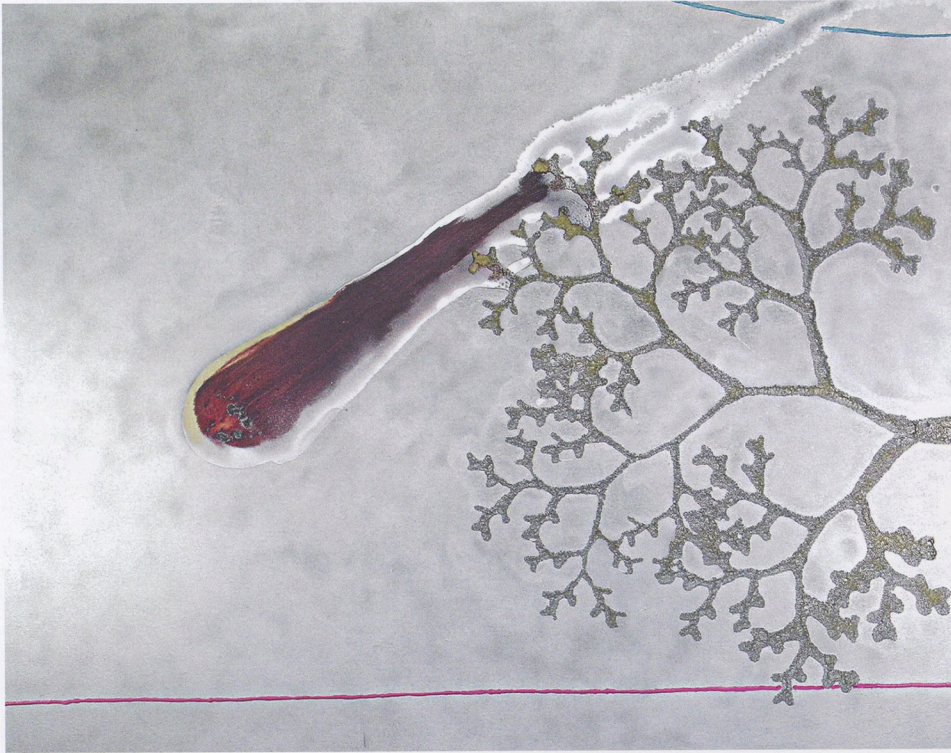


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PROFILE OF A RECENT GRADUATE: IVAN STOJAKOVIC

“My early education was shaped by historical materialism — an ideology that advocates a religious belief in science,” explains Ivan Stojakovic in the biographical statement on his website, “Ironically, I descend from a lineage of nine generations of Serbian Orthodox priests.”

Stojakovic is referring to his life in Belgrade, in the former Yugoslavia, which, in his teens, transitioned from communism to capitalism. He is also referring to a dichotomy he still feels driven — after immigrating, first to Toronto and then to New York City — to “break.” Or, conversely, to “unify.”

“While drawing from the Bauhaus idea of fusion of art, science and technology,” says Stojakovic, “my paintings seek to add the present-day information space to the old physical space in a way that connects our pre-modern bodies with our futuristic minds.”

Stojakovic graduated from the Drawing & Painting program in 2001 with an Honours AOCAD. He went on to get an MFA in 2005 from New York’s prestigious Pratt Institute, where he also received the First Place Award at the MFA Fall Exhibition, juried by Jeffrey Walkowiak. Stojakovic speaks highly of the integrated media aspect of his education at OCAD, where he was able to study diverse subjects, like photography, web design and Zen Buddhism, integrating them into his work. And he credits “brilliant” professors Paul Sloggett, Anda Kubis, JJ Lee, and Vladimir Spicanovic with teaching him the basic “commandments” that he applies to the daily practice of painting.

Spicanovic, Assistant Dean in the Faculty of Art, is effusive about Stojakovic: “Ivan is a contemporary painter who is genuine, who is not necessarily adhering to any particular style and to the pendulum swings of the art world.” Indeed, Stojakovic admits that he is nomadic in his thinking and practice; he sets his own course. “I move from painting to painting,” he says, “intention-

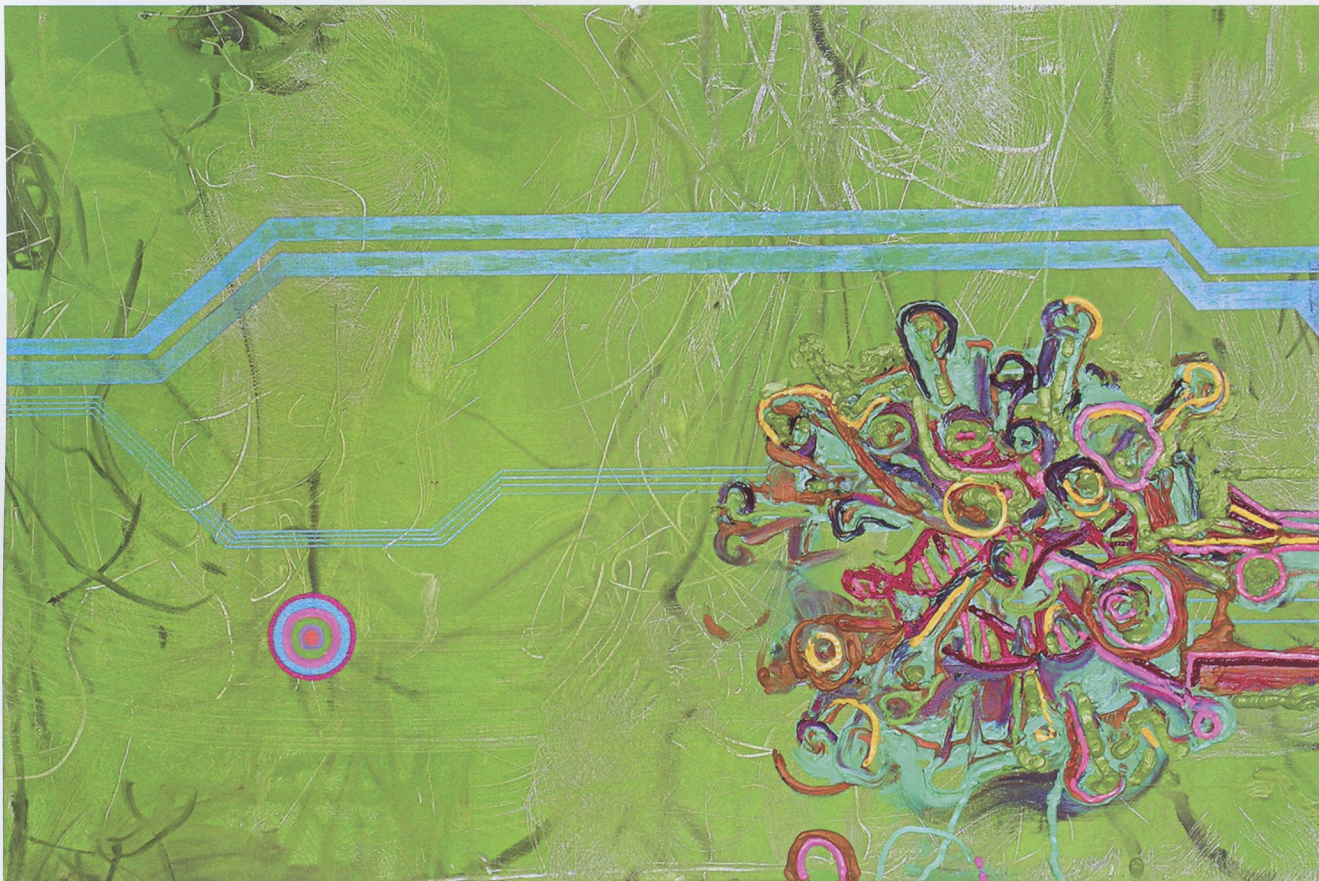
ally changing signifiers and formal devices. It’s about wandering and wonderment, and I don’t want to let that go because it’s so fun for me and for others. Nor, I think, can I let it go.”

Stojakovic’s career launched more or less immediately after graduation from OCAD with an exhibition at Toronto’s Drabinsky Gallery. Stojakovic would later mark his graduation from Pratt by participating in “Après Nous, Les Deluge,” a group show held at the Francis M. Naumann Gallery in New York City. The show was curated by Brice Brown and included major artists such as Cindy Sherman.

Writes Spicanovic in the catalogue publication for “Wetware,” Stojakovic’s 2006 exhibition at the Belgrade City Museum: “Stojakovic’s strategies of appropriation are not driven by post-modern irony.... In tune with the hybrid methodologies of contemporary painters such as Julie Mehretu, Fiona Rae, Franz Ackerman and Fabio Marcaccio, Stojakovic interrogates complex systems of visual signification, and reminds us that we live in a collaged world of hyper-aestheticized images and representations of reality.”

Stojakovic is represented by the Bridgette Mayer Gallery in Philadelphia, where there is a climate of “fusing high-tech intellectual concepts with painterly asceticism.” His goal is to find another good gallery in New York City. “Toronto taught me how to be a socially conscious, civilized artist, which is important,” he says. “Serbia taught me to be emotionally bold, a maverick. New York teaches the whole package and that’s why it’s so special — and so difficult.”

It is this difficulty, this straddling of contraries, that seems to drive Stojakovic. “There’s something that happens,” he says, “when you mix civilization and ‘primitivism’ successfully. It’s the experience of transcending current limitations; a consciousness approaching infinity. Anyway, don’t we all want something better, more powerful, more informative, more satisfying and loving, vaster and more uplifting?”



OPPOSITE LEFT
IVAN STOJAKOVIC
 ICE AGE, 2006.
 60" X 48", OIL AND
 ALKYD ON CANVAS

OPPOSITE RIGHT
 IVAN STOJAKOVIC

ABOVE
IVAN STOJAKOVIC
 GRASS ROOTS, 2007.
 54" X 36", OIL, ALKYD
 AND METALLIC SPRAY
 ON CANVAS

BELOW LEFT
IVAN STOJAKOVIC
 NEURAL BLOSSOM
 DIPTYCH (LEFT), 2007.
 36" X 54", OIL,
 ACRYLIC, ALKYD
 AND METALLIC SPRAY
 ON CANVAS

BELOW RIGHT
IVAN STOJAKOVIC
 NEURAL BLOSSOM
 DIPTYCH
 (RIGHT), 2007.
 36" X 54", OIL,
 ACRYLIC, ALKYD
 AND METALLIC S
 PRAY ON CANVAS

ALL IMAGES
 COURTESY OF
 BRIDGETTE
 MAYER GALLERY,
 PHILADELPHIA

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What a tall order. Yet it seems utterly likely Spicanovic is right. It's genuine. Stojakovic explains: "New York's identity is in cosmopolitanism and New Yorkers often take pride in knowing 'the other' as 'the other' exists in the authentic context. And they want to connect! So it makes sense for me to talk about who I really am."

What then, in these very early stages of what promises to be a great career, makes Stojakovic most proud? "I'm particularly proud of the fact that I had the courage to move into uncharted territory, to begin to create a new, complex, science/information-based, tactile, expressive, warm and open-ended visual language of wonderment and wandering for adults."

Ivan Stojakovic's most recent exhibition, "Global Nature," ran from April 3 to 28, 2007, at the Bridgette Mayer Gallery.

For more information, visit www.mayerartconsultants.com and www.ivanstojakovic.com.

