

2006

ART

Brushing up

By Daniel A. Kusner Life + Style Editor

There's nothing worse than listening to intellectuals discuss artwork. You hear high-faultin' vocabulary like "quixotic," "archetypal" and head-spinning terms like "collective unconscious."

Fortunately, gay painter David Aylsworth avoids abstract language — especially when describing his own work.

"It usually sounds so boring or stupid, but my tastes run toward bright colors. And there are some shapes that I keep using over and over: swirly and bulbous, phallic kind of things," he explains. "I think people that look at my paintings and comment on the layers. There's a lot of gunk underneath the final layer."

Standing 6'4" tall and a habitual smiler, Aylsworth resembles the vibrant, large-scale canvases that adorn the walls of the Holly Johnson Gallery, a new venue located in the Dallas Design District. Abstract shapes and forms emerge from enormous brushstrokes with happy yellows, pulsating greens and bouncy red. And then there are the titles, like "Ding Dong, Ding Dong, Ding" and "Similarly Occupied." They're slightly cryptic references to show-tune lyrics: "Guys and Dolls" and "The King and I," respectively.

Born and raised in Ohio, Aylsworth was a show-tune queen at a young age. In seventh grade, he had a sleepover party. In a feeble attempt at popularity, he invited guys from the football team. What a mistake. That night, his obsession for "A Chorus Line" took over, and Aylsworth ended up performing "Dance, 10; Looks, 3" for a puzzled young linebacker.

Destined for a career in the arts, Aylsworth's love for Broadway became useful. His day job is the collections registrar at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, where Aylsworth manages pieces the museum acquires and loans out. That means he keeps track of a lot of titled and untitled work.

When it comes to his own work — after he's finished cathartically scraping, swirling, digging and slapping paint onto a canvas, Aylsworth titles the piece with a reference that magically bubbles up — usually lyrics from musicals.

Holly Johnson Gallery, 1411 Dragon St. Opening reception, Jan 13, 2006, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. "Similarly Occupied," featuring 17 Aylsworth paintings, runs through Feb. 11. 214-369-0169.



BRUSH WITH GREATNESS: David Aylsworth will be present on Friday at an opening-night reception of an exhibit of his work at The Holly Johnson Gallery.