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ADAM SIEGEL PAINTER



RESTORATIVE POWER

ONE MAN'S WORK TRANSCENDS AND TRANSFORMS

WRITTEN BY **DIANE VADINO** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ALAN KLEHR**

“A painting doesn’t just take up space on a wall—you spend the rest of your life engaging with it,” says Chicago artist Adam Siegel, whose large canvases often convey both a bristling energy and a sense of deep meditation. A self-taught painter, Siegel studied Japanese literature and Asian history at Oberlin College rather than attend a traditional art school—a decision he says that’s proven itself to be ultimately beneficial.

“I think that because I didn’t go to art school I’ve been forced to find my own way,” he explains. “I’m not marching toward what’s happening this month in New York or Chicago, or creating work that’s colored by what everyone’s buzzing about.” Instead, Siegel’s spent the last two decades producing staggeringly evocative canvases that seem to display an unusual level of tacit communication between them. “The works respond to each other in a way that’s more than the sum of the parts,” he says. “I think it’s a natural circumstance, that I’m slowly building up a body of vocabulary in paint.”

Indeed, Siegel’s ability to moderate the emotional tenor of a space is demonstrated by his 65-painting installation at the Northwestern Specialists for Women clinic. He collaborated with the new facility at the invitation of Dr. Bonnie Wise—a founding physician and already a collector of his work—and mounted what became, essentially, a mid-career retrospective. “The project, institutional in scale, has been very demanding energetically, but the return has been very powerful personally,” Siegel says. “It’s rare that an individual artist has the chance to affect change within a setting as important as this one.”

Siegel credits his current success to persistence. “Frankly, I think things are happening now because I haven’t given up,” he says. “I was reading recently that the artists who succeed aren’t necessarily the best, but those who have the highest level of confusion endurance. I have a very high tolerance for not knowing something.” adamsiegel.com; 773.615.0099