

# DON SUGGS CONCENTRIC

17 May - 16 June, 2007

Opening reception:

Saturday, 19 May, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Venice, CA – L.A. Louver is pleased to present a rare exhibition by the Los Angeles-based artist Don Suggs. Entitled **Concentric**, the exhibition includes recent paintings and sculptures by Suggs, all of which are based on the circle.

The focal point of the exhibition is a series of paintings entitled *Patrimony/Matrimony*, in which the artist interprets iconic works of art using a conceptual framework based on palette, composition and psychological force. Suggs draws on historian/writer James Elkins' conceit that art history has brought forth "monster paintings," which he defines as those paintings about which it would be impossible to read all that has been written. Suggs' benchmark for the *Patrimony* paintings is Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.K. Version)*, 1912. From here, Suggs



Don Suggs, *Two Fridas (Matrimony Series)*, 2006, oil on 2 canvases, Installed: 69 x 85 in. (175.3 x 215.9 cm)

examines paintings created in previous 80-year increments. Included in the series is Théodore Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*, 1819, while the early 18th century is represented by the combined force of Antoine Watteau's *Gilles*, 1718, and Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's *An Allegory with Venus and Time*, 1758. The corresponding *Matrimony* paintings address a tighter time span of art created by women (a necessary convention in light of the paucity of iconic works by female artists prior to the 20th century) and focus on work created in 20-year increments. *Matrimony* paintings are based on Joan Mitchell's *Mooring*, 1970; Frida Kahlo's *Self Portrait*, 1948 and *The Love Embrace of the Universe, the Earth (Mexico), Diego, Me, and Señor Xolotl*, 1949 (which together are the basis of Suggs' two-part painting *Two Fridas*, 2006); Georgia O'Keefe's *Black Cross, New Mexico*, 1929; and unheralded artist Hilma Af Klint's *De Tio Största No. 3 (or The Ages of Man No. 3)*, 1907. In conceiving each work, Suggs first determines the "emotional heart of the original painting," which in turn becomes the center of Suggs' tondo. From here, he deconstructs the original painting, developing a complex coda of colored bands based on the prominence, and psychological and compositional weight conveyed by the colors represented in the original canvas.



Don Suggs, *Six Points: Yellowstone* (as installed: *Old Faithful, Tourists, Shadows/Two Buffalo, Pines, Wildflowers/Travertine Terraces/Grand Prismatic Spring/Morning-Yellowstone Falls Viewpoint/Sunset-Orange Spring Mound*), 2006, oil on panel, Each panel: 16 x 16 in. (40.6 x 40.6 cm)

The preparatory work for these tondo paintings is extensive, both in Suggs' development of their conceptual structure, as well as the means for their execution. In the latter regard, Suggs designed and constructed a room-sized turntable. This machine includes a suspended platform with mattress that supports Don as he paints, and includes a massive built-in ventilated flatbed drying chamber.

A process of distillation is also employed in the smaller *Six Point Landscapes*. These are painted on six 16-inch panels that may be hung in different arrangements, including triangular, row and column formations. Suggs' circles are derived from detailed memories

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of particular scenes, which that are also articulated in the paintings' titles -- for example *Six Points: Yellowstone* (as installed: *Old Faithful, Tourists, Shadows/Two Buffalo, Pines, Wildflowers/Travertine Terraces/Grand Prismatic Spring/Morning-Yellowstone Falls Viewpoint/Sunset-Orange Spring Mound*), 2006. As such, the panel entitled *Old Faithful, Tourists, Shadows* is based on a scene of an erupting geyser, and the surrounding landscape, salt deposits, blue sky, the bench upon which tourists sit in patterned clothing, and shadows that stretch across a wooden deck.

The formal conventions employed in determining the structure of the tondos gives way to an intuitive/linguistic approach to signifying in Suggs' series of *Tondototems*. These are two-dimensional columns of circular iconographs that reference such cultural phenomena as art history, politics, philosophy and Pop culture. Suggs stacks four tondo/image combinations in vertical formation, disrupting standard linear reading convention. The exhibition also includes several wall sculptures entitled *Fleurs du Mall* (a pun on Flowers of Evil), made up of found plastic objects, each of which is punctuated by a protruding tondo form. *Headhunter's Dilemma*, 2003-2005, completes the exhibition, while serving as a bridge to the artist's show at Otis, that features four further works in Suggs' 14-year-long series of *Heuristic Paintings*.

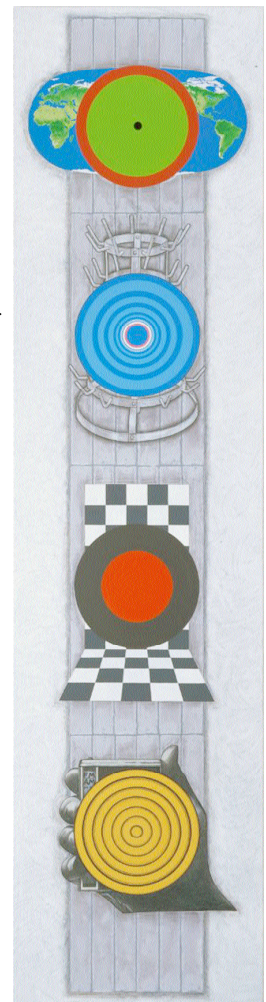


Don Suggs, *Tondototem 2D1 (nemo mnemon hemo tetoni)*, 2006, acrylic, pastel and charcoal on panel, 96 x 23 in. (243.8 x 58.4 cm)

Don Suggs was born in Fort Worth, Texas and grew up in San Diego. He received his BA from UCLA, where he studied art, film and psychology, and remained at the university to pursue both a MA and MFA, graduating in 1972. Suggs has won two National Endowment for the Arts Grants (1973 and 1991), and has been represented by L.A. Louver since 1976. *Concentric* is the artist's eighth solo exhibition with the gallery. Suggs has also had a distinguished career as a teacher, and has held positions at Florida State University at Tallahassee; Franconia College, New Hampshire; the University of Southern California; and Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles (1972-1984), where he taught drawing, painting, sculpture and color theory. Since 1983, Suggs has taught painting and drawing at UCLA.

Concurrent to Don Suggs: **Concentric** at L.A. Louver, a 38-year survey of the artist's work may be seen at the Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design. Entitled **One Man Group Show**, the exhibition is on view April 14 through June 23, 2007. It is accompanied by a 100-page catalogue with over 80-color reproductions. The publication includes a foreword by Meg Linton, exhibition co-curator, and Director of the Ben Maltz Gallery and Public Programs; an essay by Doug Harvey, exhibition co-curator, writer and art critic; with additional text by Nevin Schreiner, writer and critic, and an original poem by Paul Vangelisti, Chair, Otis Graduate Studies: Writing. The catalogue will be available May 18, 2007 and is priced at \$30 (with a special pre-publication price of \$25).

L.A. Louver is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Validated parking available.



Don Suggs, *Tondototem 2D2 (paragon paradize paradize)*, 2006, acrylic, pastel and charcoal on panel, 96 x 24 in. (243.8 x 61 cm)

For further information and visuals, please contact:  
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