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Scott Greene: Capitulare de Vita

SCOTT GREENE
JUL 10 - AUG 21

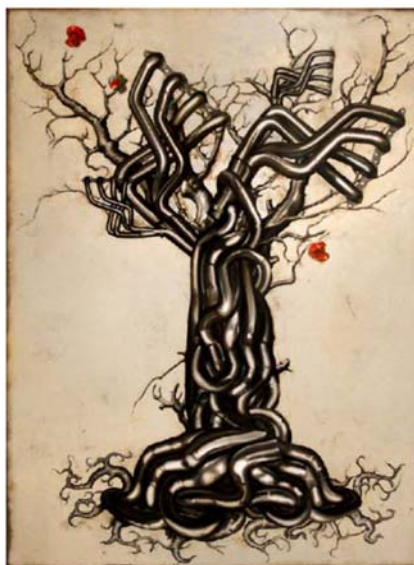
by Elizabeth Johnson

The title of Scott Greene's new show at Catherine Clark Gallery, "Capitulare de Vita," loosely translates as "capturing life" or "inventory of life."¹ Scott has built a career making humorous and dramatic oil prints and paintings that inventory the contents of our world. In his work, Greene comments symbolically on relationships between politics, nature, environmental disasters, war, religion, pop culture, greed, blind obedience, shame, and guilt.² His subjects range broadly between the public and personal, conflating such far-ranging objects as satellite dishes, sheep, extensions cords, trees, and flowers to represent everything from technology to energy, life and fragility, respectively.

The painting *Descansos* (2010) refers to roadside memorials for highway casualties. Calvary is implied by the painting's centered, upright structure. To this armature, Greene attaches oil barrels, an upended washing machine, an empty garbage bag, security cameras, a BP logo, an uprooted tree, a bed's headboard, a loudspeaker, a transformer, bits of signature flowers and lattice, and a satellite dish emblazoned with a big fat zero. Sports helmets and Darth Vader masks litter the ground, skulls at the foot of the cross.



Descansos, 2010; oil on canvas on panel, 54 x 40 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Catherine Clark Gallery, San Francisco.



Mistletoe, 2010; oil on canvas on panel, 84 x 62 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Catherine Clark Gallery, San Francisco.

Descansos provides rich material for the imagination, and viewing it, I enjoyed making sense of the chaos, drawing conclusions about its disparate objects. I associated religion with Big Oil, filtered through memory and loss. I wondered if we have lost the environmental battle already. Is it too late? Do the loudspeaker, satellite dishes, cameras, and transformer connect and motivate or suppress a population? I puzzled over the painting's oddest components: the washing machine, headboard, and empty garbage bag. Familiar fragments of aphorisms—"left holding the bag," "it all comes out in the wash," and "being asleep"—extend the painting's unresolved mood.

Mistletoe (2010) abandons the illustrational style, pop culture symbols, and proto-renaissance perspective I expect from Greene's paintings.³ Clouds and mists that once hid the horizon line evaporate, revealing an off-white, flat background edged in gold. Abstracted Coke cans and a sprig of mistletoe attached like a parasitic fungus represent negative aspects of humanity on a writhing "Tree of Life" assembled from car exhaust pipes. Shiny chrome bark, roots, and branches thwart the eye; I wondered what is transported through them. Is the tree of life a processing brain, an oil refinery, or the guts of a living machine? By reducing his inventory of symbols, Greene challenges the narrative glue that holds his compositions together. Winter has come to Greene's Eden and the shiny chrome pipes penetrate the snowy background. The artist dives into his work with renewed vigor.

"CAPITULARE DE VITA" IS ON VIEW CATHERINE CLARK GALLERY THROUGH AUGUST 21, 2010.

NOTES:

1. Press release, Catherine Clark Gallery, June 12 2010.
2. Conversation with Scott Greene, Catherine Clark Gallery, July 11 2010.
3. Press release, Catherine Clark Gallery, June 12 2010.