

# Giants are brought low in works of Scott Greene

**Kenneth Baker**  
*Galleries*

Albuquerque painter Scott Greene invests too much in the irony of responding to recent events in artistic idioms borrowed from centuries past.

Greene practices pastiche with great flair. He slyly takes inspiration and technical licks from such sources as Tiepolo, Goya and the Dutch Baroque landscapists and cooks up comic allegories of contemporary life.

In "Stay the Course" (2004), a towering galleon — the ship of state, a ship of fools or both — drifts toward the viewer. Figures dangle overboard, ensnared in an overspill of cargo. Smoke billows from the aft port side. Rigging and sails hang in tatters, except for two giant mast-mounted satellite dishes.

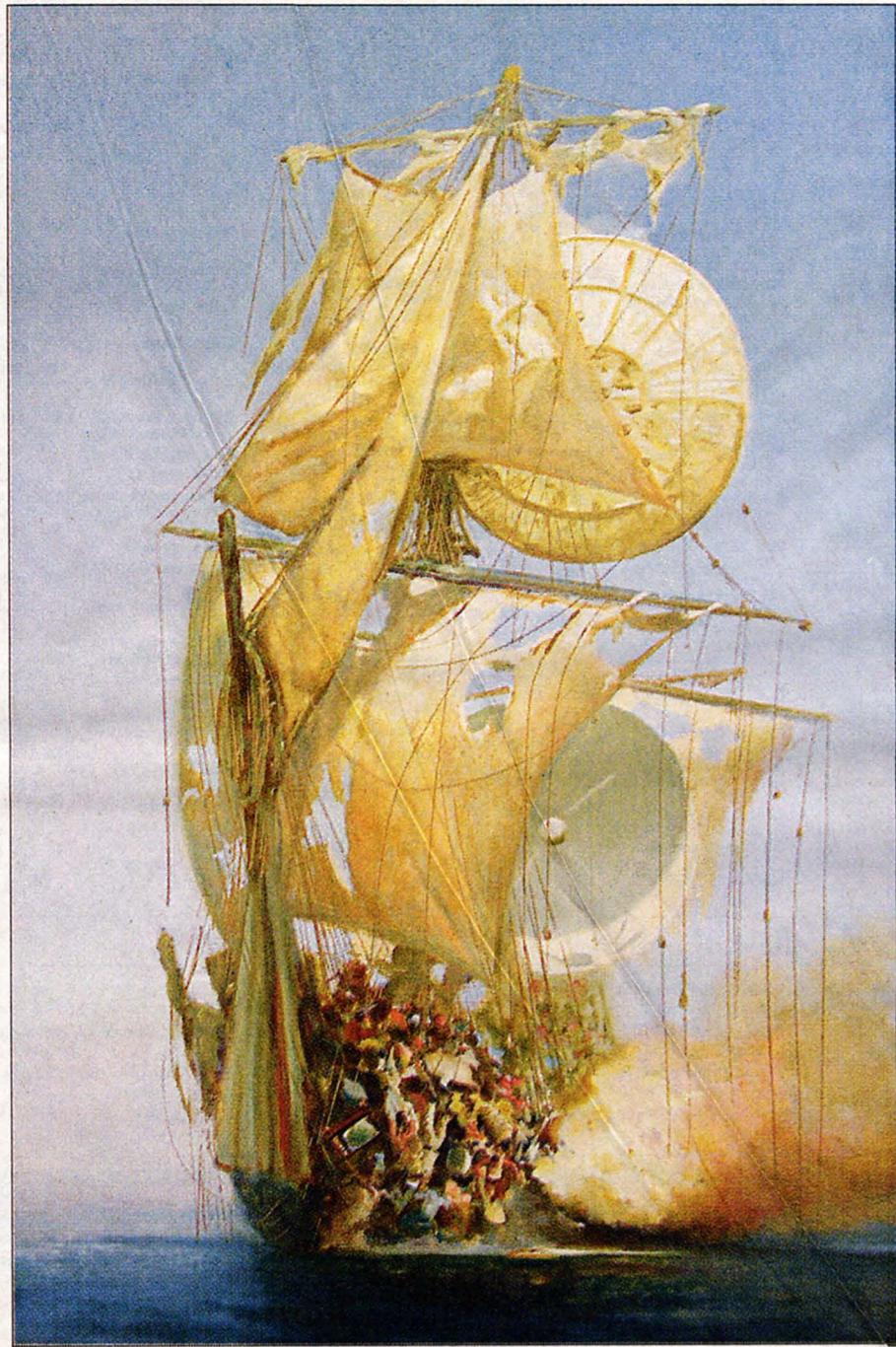
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Greene frequently shows satellite dishes, symbols of readiness to communicate, being put to unintended uses. The ship in his "Clear Channel" (2004) has completely replaced sails with dishes.

We need no prompting beyond the title "Stay the Course," a Reaganism revived by George W. Bush, to see the painting as an image of a foreign policy shipwreck.

Greene digs deeper in the same vein in the epic "Machinations: Death From a Thousand Cuts" (2004), a 12-foot-long canvas.

Near front and center in the picture a slightly bigger-than-life male figure lies splayed upside down across the elevated platform of a scissor-lift. He hangs entangled in orange and black electrical cord, strangled by a string of Christmas lights. By his exposed physique, shredded blue tights and other clues embedded in the scene, a viewer can gradually recognize him as Superman. Across the landscape around him, pillage unfolds. People march by carrying or dragging such things as a mattress, an air conditioner, a mirror, a painting. A jet engine rests on a truck bed



Catherine Clark Gallery

**Scott Greene's "Stay the Course"** is a not-so-veiled reference to the U.S. ship of state.

at the edge of the frame.

Mayhem proceeds in the background: A woman stabs a man, several figures brandish pistols, a lubricious monk molests a boy, a man torches a strung-up effigy, an explosion creates more ruin.

Again, we do not really need details such as the distant dome, possibly a mosque, to make us think of the looting unleashed by the conquest of Baghdad and the subsequent violent anarchy that

has mortified the United States.

"Machinations" points beyond an unhappy conclusion of events in Iraq to an unhappy conclusion about Greene's art. Only a picture of this physical and narrative complexity, which cost him almost a year's effort, can keep from collapsing into punch line art, as most of the work on view does.

**Scott Greene: New Fears:** Paintings. **Walter Robinson: Pathetic Fallacy:** Sculpture. Ends today. Catherine Clark Gallery, 49 Geary St., San Francisco. (415) 399-1439, [www.cclarkgallery.com](http://www.cclarkgallery.com). Jess: Paintings, collages and sculpture. Through Jan. 29. Gallery Paule Anglim, 14 Geary St., San Francisco. (415) 433-2710, [www.gallerypauleanglim.com](http://www.gallerypauleanglim.com).