



CHAMBLISS GIOBBI

Time and Again



Head of Fisher Stevens V, 2007, collage, Magic-Sculpt on aluminum panel, 17.75 x 23.75 in.

A Place in the Genre

They seem so familiar. Like landscapes or traditional portraits, the photo collages of Chambliss Giobbi emit an aura of ease brought about by his use of a genre well ensconced in our imaginations through over a hundred years of modern and contemporary art, advertising, and film. Dadaists kicked it old school with paper, scissors and horse glue and somewhere today a high school kid learning Photoshop has begun cobbling together a figurative collage by dismantling and reconfiguring tawdry bits of Lindsey Lohan.

Working within any existing and recognizable form, it becomes a question of defining your own territory and expressing the subtleties that distinguish your version of the genre. The initial part of Giobbi's process is not readily apparent to the viewer (though it is visible, at all times). His finished works rely on a methodology in which the artist invests substantially in his subject matter. Giobbi spends considerable time with each of his models in lengthy photo sessions and eventually shoots and prints thousands of images.

It is an old master mojo that draws upon the personal intimacy created between artist and model—the application of a perpetual gaze toward a subject that ultimately rewards with the ability to capture subtleties both physical and emotional and to evoke these multiple textures. Giobbi's personal investment with his models is paralleled with his obvious formal investment in the works. It is where old master mojo meets mad craftsmanship. (Giobbi's two *Head of Fisher Stevens* pieces look like aged Surrealist gems retrieved from a museum vault.)

In a work like *Small Head of Gina DePalma*, the subjects wildly distorted head works because all the cuts are carefully calculated and they work. Even the most abrupt cuts appear more as apt and considered segues. No matter how manipulated the image, Giobbi's manner is never slapdash. His collaged elements are precise and carefully wrought within their cacophony. They are arranged with great specificity and culminate in a final composition that has a natural and easy appearance. There is also a deep attention to detail—in *Portrait of Laine Valentino II*, there is a strange charm to the skewed perspectives visible in the background through equally skewed windows. All the elements contribute to Chambliss' creation of a credible surreality and a convincing mis en scene.

It is mad craftsmanship because in person you clearly see the physicality of the collages. You see the layered paper but you also see their smoothness—not the invisible smoothness of a digital



print, but the smoothness of disparate elements brought into a fluid whole. Edges of paper wash softly into neighboring forms. They achieve their own kind of seamless. In an era where digital photo tricks abound, Giobbi's works have a warm analog hum.

It is an analog hum of both surface and tone—empathy is evident in every gesture and every work. Trace a path up along Giobbi's suited and naked self-portraits and all their emphatic mutations of form ultimately congeal into a singular, sensible mass. All their sprouting appendages function like musical fills—a horn riff, a rim shot— punctuating the composition. And yet, these simultaneous depictions of multiple states of mind and iterations of multiple moments and sensations never trade away their emotional core for a jazzy effect. Even in the extreme jagged anguish of *Electra Dances* (*Penny Arcade*), there is a measure of fondness for the subject, no matter how discordant the rendering.

Part of the reason—appropriately enough, in figurative work—is that Giobbi never loses the eyes. In all the works, the eyes of his subjects are never veiled or hidden. Sometimes languid, sometimes burning, they ignite the works with life, as eyes tend to do. Even in *Portrait of Gina DePalma I*, where they eyes almost slide off the picture plane, they radiate over the rest of the bulbous whole. They give depth to both the undeniable wave of sexuality curling through the work, but also to its pervading sense of loss and pathos.

This complex and ever-shifting tableaux of visual cues and their disparate emotional states persistently summon up musical connotations. A mess of notes and chords and rhythms butted up against each other into a new kaleidoscopic whole. Once you begin tracing the visual movement through the forms within the works, the swoops of line and shadow, it is impossible not to sense their implicit musicality.

In a method that gives emphasis to simultaneity of action and form, and even suggests an imminent and perhaps perpetual state of entropy, Giobbi's collages also achieve their own iconoclastic harmony. Anguish, anxiety, affection, fear, longing, shame and confusion all abide in the portraits, the revelation of a series of personal moments, revelations, and states of being. Despite their intentionally disjointed presence, they exist as equally valid and essential to evoking the complex totality of their subjects.

Chambliss Giobbi's works have flow.

John Massier
Visual Arts Curator



Portrait of Laine Valentino II, 2002, collage, beeswax on aluminum panel, 56 x 91.75 in.
left: *Electra Dances* (*Penny Arcade*), 2008, collage, Magic-Sculpt on aluminum panel, 60 x 60 x 2 in.



Suited Self-Portrait III, 1998, collage, beeswax on aluminum panel, 56 x 91.75 in

Chambliss Giobbi grew up in Katonah, New York and received a B.F.A. in Music Composition from Boston University. A recipient of Guggenheim, NEA and NYFA fellowships, Giobbi was a prolific composer of classical music for fifteen years before turning to visual art. The notion of time and simultaneity in the development of musical ideas has become a central theme in his fractured, stop-frame images.

Giobbi has exhibited at Artists Space in NYC, the Katonah Museum of Art and Jack The Pelican Presents in Brooklyn, NY. He is currently participating in Stretching The Truth at the John Kohler Art Museum in Sheboygan, WI, LOCUS at Two Trees, Brooklyn, and will have his first solo gallery exhibition in November '08 at Mito Galeria de Arte Contemporaneo in Barcelona. His work has been reviewed in the New York Times and has been featured in Bomb Magazine and SLEEK Magazine.

He lives and works in New York City.



*Small Head of Gina DePalma I, 2004, collage on aluminum panel, 12 x 12 in.
front cover : Portrait of Gina DePalma I, 2003, collage on aluminum panel, 60 x 60 in.*

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