

# Sanibel-captiva-islander

## Hauck flattens identity in red, white and black brush strokes

By LAURA BLASKOWITZ, [lblankowitz@breezenewspapers.com](mailto:lblankowitz@breezenewspapers.com)

**Captiva, FL November 3, 2006 –**

Acknowledgment of oneself and what it is that gives you your identity is a difficult task, particularly in our media-based age. Atlanta-based artist and 20-year Sanibel visitor Christopher Hauck tackles the idea of who we are and how we construct ourselves in his on-going series “Identity Crisis.” His work was recently displayed at the Arts for ACT Gallery in Fort Myers.

“The series explores how we construct our identities and how we also sort of assign our identities to other people,” Hauck explained. “That was the challenge, and when I was thinking about paintings to explore that concept, this is the result.”

Hauck’s show consists of large canvases with bold red backgrounds and figures constructed out of barcodes.

“This was really a reduction, just kind of trying to distill things down to what could be done to convey this flattening of identity, this sort of ubiquitous nature of how identities are constructed through and influenced by media and advertising,” Hauck said. “We’re marketed to constantly. All of that bubbling around led me to approaching the work with a sort of graphic arts mentality. In a certain sense, they look like advertisements.”

The graphic work, the simplistic lines and one-dimensional figures, are a departure for Hauck. “My paintings were very painterly. There was a lot of paint and color. I painted with a palette knife for the past four or five years when I started this,” he said.

However different his new series is from his work in the past, Hauck has been applauded. He said, “The one common thread is that it’s all figurative work. I think they appreciated the risk I was taking.”

From Atlanta, Ga. to Berlin, Germany, Hauck has seen his work accepted in a variety of cultures: Identity, through mass marketing and media, is a global product, the self, a commodity.

“I think that technology always evokes change initially, and people are trying to adapt. The computer is such a highly mediated environment. Television is not just a single broadcast, but multiple broadcasts. You think about this. How does your mind process all of that? Then you have advertising on just about every surface,” Hauck explained.



“It’s trying to be the model-thin beautiful ideal man or woman. And then on the other hand, you have blogs, you have utube, you have the ability to really individualize yourself through all of this technology and then broadcast yourself. That’s what’s so interesting.”

Hauck’s work poses questions about the duality of the self in juxtaposition to the media. Can technology both trap and free the individual?

“Hopefully, there’s a lot of unanswered questions after you view the work. If the viewer walks away with that then I’m thrilled. There’s no answer to these things,” Hauck said.

Though his pieces do leave questions, Hauck accompanies the works with descriptions that satirically mimic the sales pitches in glossy magazine pages. “Girlfriends,” for example depicts female figures, barcodes, sharing drinks. Hauck describes: ‘Sex and the City’ spawned a newly liberated identity for women of the next generation, generation X women maturing into the working girl, take-charge women of tomorrow. They are feminine, sexual, tough and out to get what they want. ‘You go, girlfriend’ is their mantra...”

The side-bar ad lines for his work provide a bit more depth, however thin the layer, to his purposely one-dimensional work.

“That’s one thing about exhibiting artwork. There’s this bravado and facade that exists that oftentimes galleries and museums foster and it tends to distance between the artist and viewer. I prefer to have that collapsed and get them involved more in discussion and exchange,” Hauck explained.

A full-time artist for the past six years, Hauck wants to continue working on “Identity Crisis.” “I’m having fun with this. I feel really connected to the work. I’m hoping I’ll be able to explore this for several years,” he said.

Hauck is an artist worth keeping up with. While his show has left the area to travel on through the states, the bold graphic pieces will not soon be forgotten.