

# RICHARD WEISS

making art we *dance* to

By Michael Potts



Circus Box, illuminated box, mixed media (acrylic on wood, glass and paper, LED lights), 10" x 10" x 8".



The Empire, acrylic on wood panels, 50" x 50".

“Always I am like a little bee, buzzing from art to music to film and back, all my life. To me, an artist’s bio has no value. Know us by our work!” Thus speaks Richard Weiss, whose life spans continents as well as media.

“Eight months a year, I live in Fort Bragg. I love the beauty of the coast, the relaxed atmosphere of a small town. After 12 years, I’m still in awe of the sunsets. In contrast



Portrait Richard Weiss, ink on paper, self portrait in collaboration with Carolyn Hagopjan, 14" x 11".

Upper left: Richard Weiss’ name symbol.

to this secluded life, I have a very active social life during the autumn months when I live in Paris, walking, admiring the architecture, painting only when I feel like staying home. Every year I spend a few

weeks in a small village in the French Alps, not painting, just walking the countryside, visiting the myriad medieval towns, meeting with friends, sampling some good wine.

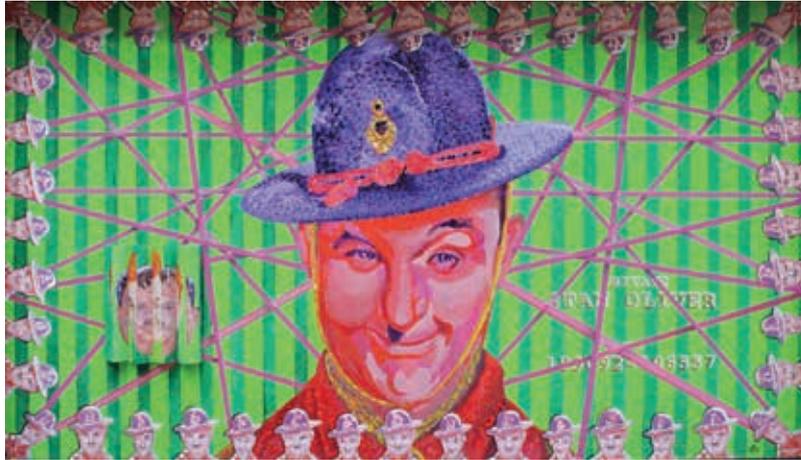
“These three different environments – ocean, mountain, city – feed my creative process. I create most of my work on the beautiful Mendocino Coast – my real home. My studio is in my house, and I practically live like a hermit, creating 10 to 12 hours a day. When I’m painting, I am so involved, time stops. When I play music, if I am sad, my music is sad, but no matter how I feel when I paint, my paintings all have this in common: they are happy and playful.

“Right now, I am excited by the idea of expanding the number of images readable in one single painting, so I am making what I call accordion or fan paintings. Look at the piece straight, you see an abstract, but step to the right, you find a figurative image; step left, a different image again. Back to the center, you are looking at both pictures at the same time – the abstract – but your brain favors one image over the other . . . and suddenly that image pops out!

“I want my paintings to surprise you. I want you to



Mon’ and Nef’, mixed media on wood, 18" x 38".



Stan Oliver, acrylic on wood, 23" x 37".

stop, return, 'play' the painting forward and back. If a painting is three feet wide, I want you to move five feet left to see the picture change . . . then back to the other side, looking for the other image. You're dancing! I want you to respond to and participate in my paintings.

"I expect my kinetic art to evolve. I am sure there is a way to embed more than three pictures in one painting. Everybody's intrigued by how one image changes into another image. I have so much fun watching the way people interact with my work!"

Richard loves the interplay of shared imagery, those iconic paintings that populate every art lover's memory. "My paintings often have characters, like Mona, that people recognize right away. By painting cultural icons, symbols, and elements of popular culture into a painting, I can comment on social, political, or cultural issues. Everything in my paintings is meaningful; even the frame is an integral part of the work.

"When I start a painting, first I consider different ways for the viewer to see it. I spend a lot of time planning: 'How is it glued? How thick are the pieces of wood? Where do the hinges go?' I almost always paint on wood, because I enjoy constructing the support and frame as much as I like painting on it. The subject comes second, but I don't start until I know what the subject will be. The planning is always black and white. There is one thing I never plan: the colors, the only freedom I always save. I enjoy experimenting with the colors. I never know which colors I'm going to start with. Inspiration comes from my imagination, not the world around me. Painting allows me to

shed the bonds of the logical and rational. My goal is to provoke an element of surprise and transmit playfulness and whimsy to the viewer. I want my interactive paintings to invite the viewer to transform the overall image into a myriad of possibilities."

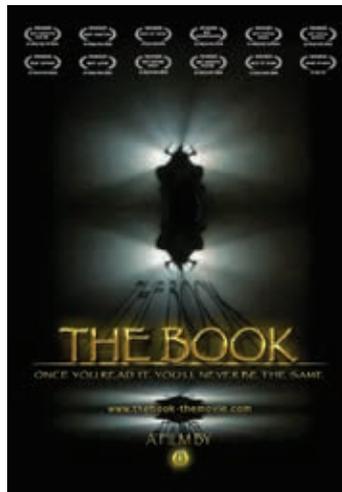
Richard also sculpts, arranges and composes music, and makes films. "In the 1980s, producing bands in San Francisco, I was asked if I could make a music video. I did so and it got great reviews. Well then, why not make a full-length movie?" The result, *The Book: They Came from Inner Space*, is a kitsch science fiction feature film (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers* meets *Flash Gordon*) that pays homage to the sci-fi classics of the '70s and '80s. As an official selection of festivals in America, Australia, and Asia, *The Book* won an impressive 13 awards in 2011 and 2012, including Best of Show at the Los Angeles Movie Awards.

"Art is my life: I am bad at anything else! I don't like learning, but if I need to do something, I investigate by myself, and always push the envelope . . . because I don't know where to stop. I don't know

anything, and because I don't know, I always push to the extreme."

The Mendocino Art Center will feature an exhibition of Richard Weiss' work in the Main Gallery, April 27 through May 28, with a reception Saturday, May 13, 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

There will be two free screenings of Richard's movie, *The Book*: Saturday, May 20, 4:00 p.m., at the Mendocino Art Center; and Saturday, May 27, 7:00 p.m., at Tim Carmody Art Gallery in Fort Bragg.



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