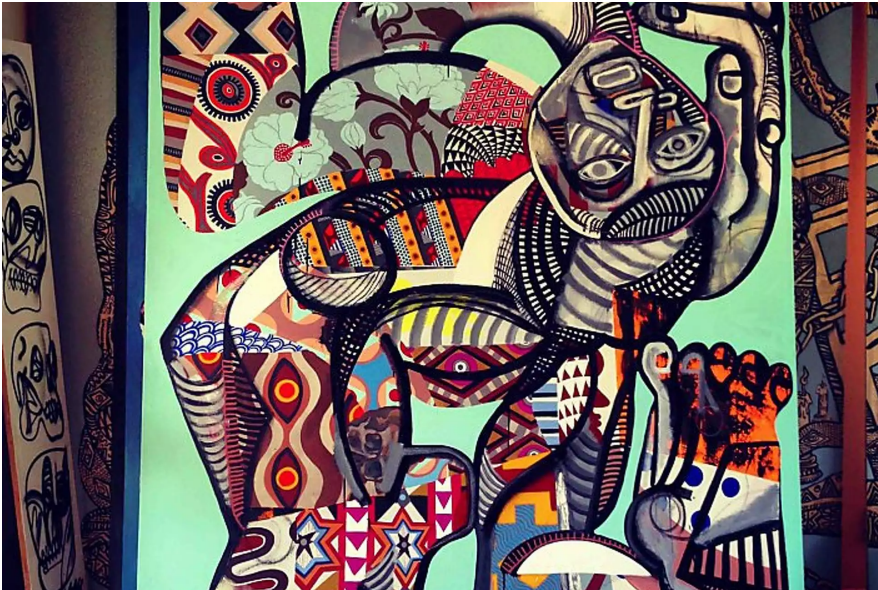


SF Gate 'Chaos/Clarity': Art for art's sake

By Kimberly Chun, April 17, 2013.



Courtesy of Zio Ziegler

Parse the colorful quasi-cubist figures, contorted and curled in loop-the-loop compositions, in the paintings and murals of Mill Valley artist Zio Ziegler, and you begin to understand his high-energy, exploratory vibe.

The artist's approach to his almost psychedelic street-art inspired works is just as freewheeling as his imagery, whether he's dashing off a mural for Facebook headquarters in Palo Alto or the entire building front of the new Ian Ross Gallery, where Ziegler's currently exhibiting in "Chaos/Clarity."

According to Ziegler, the latter mural took all of six hours as he listened to a "History of Civilization" audiobook. "I embrace the mistakes and turn them into opportunities," he says from his Mount Tam studio, where he's prepping to fly to Puerto Rico for a museum show. "I remember I didn't have any room for the second leg and thought, 'Uh-oh, where am I going to put it?' "

Fortunately the lessons learned while teaching Marin second-graders came into play: "I let the kids push my hand and I react to that," Ziegler says. "I always make everything up as I go along."

The massive black-and-white mural of two "tabula rasa" figures, as Ziegler calls them, impresses, as does his matter-of-fact remark that Ross will probably paint over it later. It's one of 1,500 paintings that Ziegler has completed in the past year - an outsized figure that seems to suit him perfectly imperfectly, though he recently underwent a "quarter-life crisis. I thought, 'Oh my god, I'm turning 25! What have I done?' "

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The artist may have inherited his hearty appetite for accomplishments and adventure from his father, Banana Republic founder (and former Chronicle reporter) Mel Ziegler. Ecstatic, roving allusions to Oswaldo Guayasamín, "Samsara," Barry McGee, minimalist house and Hokusai flow freely alongside talk of his paintings. His own artistic trajectory - going from wheat-pasting in San Francisco as a middle schooler to exploring a studio practice at Rhode Island School of Design - is riddled with references to his handmade-clothing pop-ups devoted to disseminating his work.

His latest side endeavor - a storytelling app for artists - picks up a related thread. "I wanted to create a platform for people who wanted to overshare," Ziegler says, "where they would feel comfortable.

"We're told doodles and mistakes aren't art. I want to take the spotlight off it and say, 'Art for art's sake.' "