

Theater Deities' Entry into Detroit, in 2014  
Oil on linen, 48 inches by 60 inches, by Oscar B. Oscar  
to be exhibited at Lawrence Street Gallery, 5-28 March, 2014

Artist commentary on the painting

Version 24 February, 2014.

This unfinished painting was inspired by the current state of Detroit, year 2014.  
Work will continue in the weeks to come.

The title resembles that of the great painting "Christ's Entry into Brussels, in 1899", by James Ensor. Both paintings depict masses of humanity in an intense urban scene, but the two compositions are not similar. Ensor's work is a vicious satire about politics of his time. Mine is more an appreciation of Detroit's merits and my wishes for its future in education, business and community. This is a time of ferment for Detroit. I distort buildings, the geography of the city, colors, and proportions. Within the masses are public figures, good, bad and otherwise. Dramas about politics, the vibrant arts scene, economic fortunes of the city and the spirited citizens color my impressions of Detroit and where it could be going.

The Theater Deities loudly proclaim the needs for personal responsibility, integrity of our public figures, strong investment in education and recognition of local creativity. This burst of drama amplifies the sense in Detroit of reinvention and possibilities.

The trumpeter celebrates the humanities and sciences. The magic square on building near the trumpet player is known as the Melencolia Magic Square. The sum along each row, each column, each diagonal and each corner quadrant is 34. This magic square appears in the 1514 etching Melencolia, by Albrecht Dürer. This year appears in the bottom row of the square and is exactly 500 years before 2014. The angel sitting near the upper right edge of the painting (near downtown Dearborn) is inspired by the angel in the Melancolia print. Those who love and hope for Detroit do feel melancholy at recent history. In contrast, the timelessness of beautiful ideas is constant, whatever the fortunes of the moment.

There are other art historical references. Figures in Harlequin costumes (colored lozenges and triangles), representing pure or innocent emotion. The Byzantine images of Russian clerics go with the nearby Greek eastern rite church. Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo hover above the Detroit Institute of Art, repelling the Orr-Wolves who hunger after the treasures inside. Between the two Russian clerics' heads is a view of the Heidelberg Project.

Down Woodward Avenue, one sees MoCAD, classical musicians playing in front of the Fisher Music Center, the Fox Theater and the sports arenas, the opera house, a jazz ensemble. In the foreground, workers spiritedly carry rails down the middle of the street, preparing to work on the upcoming light rail. Wayne State University on the right and Center for Creative Studies on the left educate eager learners. Further to the right are the Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit, Gallery 4731 and the Creative Corridor. Religious leaders gather by Woodward Avenue to discuss their missions. Note the religious buildings throughout this painting. To the left of Woodward is the Charles Wright Museum, the Science Center, the Scarab Club. Farther north on Woodward is an historic cemetery on the right, and Lawrence Street Gallery in Ferndale on the left. Towards the east, are views of Detroit's Eastern Market and in Hamtramck, the Planet Ant Theater and the local Islamic center.

This ephemeral text applies to the present unfinished state of the painting (March, 2014). A future state of this painting may inspire different commentary.