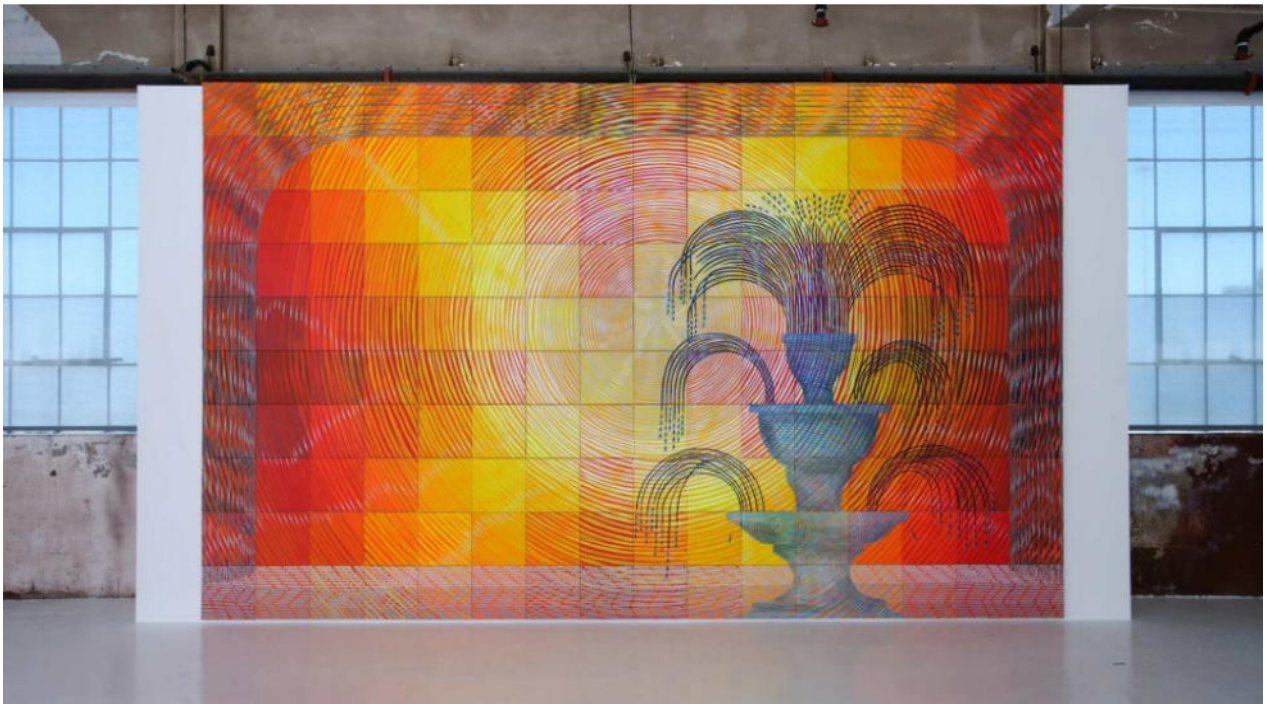


Andrew Schoultz @ Hosfelt

JUNE 27, 2020

by [Glen Helfand](#)



The day of my appointment to see Andrew Schoultz's show at Hosfelt arrived three months from when I'd last set foot in an art gallery. On my drive to San Francisco from Oakland, I wondered how that absence — 90 days of pondering the difference between actual and virtual events — might alter my perception. Would it allow me to see with fresh eyes as if returning from a vacation?

The interruption, I soon realized, was no vacation. We've been pelted with anxieties and systemic changes, all of which make Schoultz's work seem particularly timely since it deals, as it always has, with tumult. The result is the kind of show we've come to expect from him: wildly ambitious, generously immersive and crackling with the energy of unrest.

Throughout his career, Schoultz has created abundant, densely patterned paintings and sculptures that address historical inequity, mythic struggles and the shortcomings of capitalism and imperial conquest. As with his last show in 2017, he once again goes all-out, filling the gallery with everything from small drawings to large murals to freestanding sculptures made at an architectural scale. What jumps out most vividly are overheated colors: oranges and reds, a shift from the sobering dark blues that dominated the earlier

exhibition. Set against crisply painted white walls and floors, which amplify and accentuate the works' chromatic temperature, they call to mind those first nights of protest chaos when cars were set on fire, and pent-up anger was unleashed through physical destruction.

It's tempting to see the show as a color-coded chart of cultural currents. The colors suggest flames, with the wavy energy of heat expressed in Op-ish moiré effects, similar to those seen in paintings by Anoka Faruquee, another gallery artist. But since some of the works were created over four years (2016-20), it's clear that what we see is less a reaction to current events than an expression of Schoultz's consistent interests. Many pieces here convey a force field that is both sinister and sunny, but also strangely uplifting.



Red Eye, 2020, acrylic on paper, 29 1/2 x 20 1/2 inches

A case in point is *Fountain*, 2019, a mural-sized acrylic work consisting of 160 reverberantly glowing canvas-covered panels. It's installed on a freestanding wall before windows that look out onto a traffic-clogged freeway whose congestion is now beginning to reach pre-pandemic levels: a backdrop signifying urban tension. Concentric sunburst circles at the center form a vortex in which movement is implied in broken, graphic lines. The composition also carries neo-classical overtones, evoked by the gently arched proscenium. At the right, a three-tiered fountain expels water imparting a semblance of serenity. But it's the bold colors that define the painting, portending some dramatic event that might disrupt the otherwise placid scene.

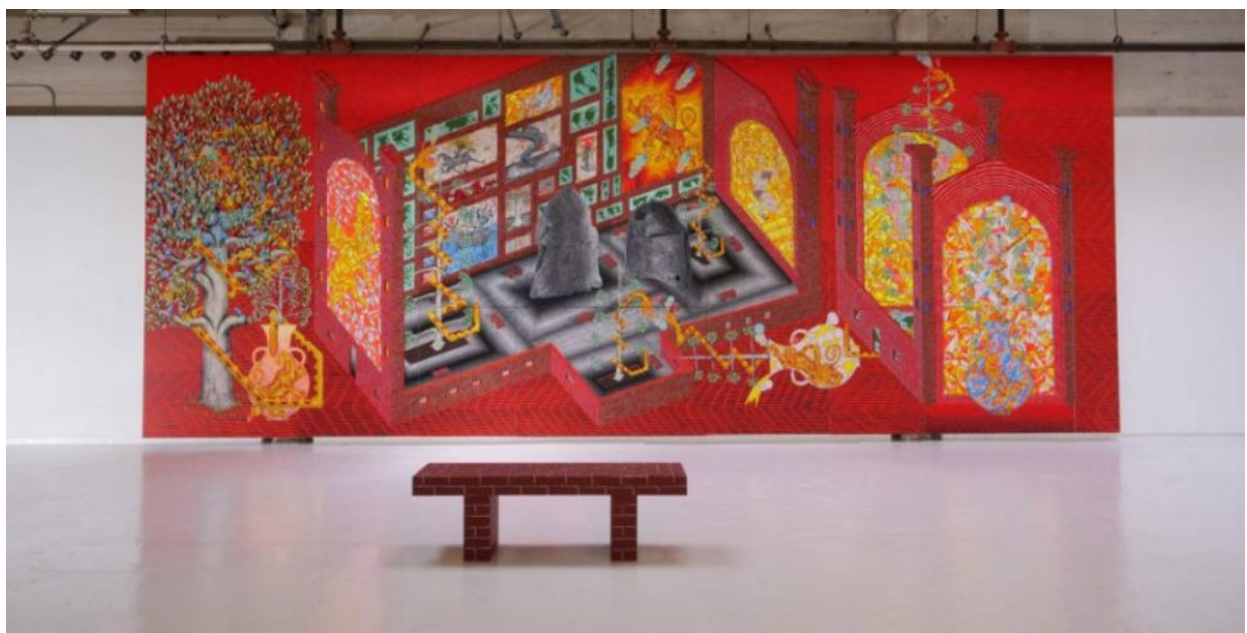
Arches appear in other paintings as niches for still lifes in which vessels, tigers and/or snakes figure prominently. In other works, these architectural elements serve as windows through which views of chromatic energies, glorious static and young trees, painted in minty green, can be glimpsed.

A freestanding piece, *Distance Plaza*, 2020, consisting of six rectangular monoliths, forms a kind of lenticular screen. It's filled with visual static given off by moiré patterns that shift as you move through the gallery. Within the space, Schoultz has created various "rooms" in which you can linger, and, in a couple of spots, relax on simple, modernist benches, the surfaces painted in motifs that echo the paintings.



Viewers familiar with Schoultz's previous work will note various experimental elements. *War Helmet* (Prism), 2020, for example, appears to be a photographic, black-and-white, representation of a piece of medieval armor, set against a painted background that, when viewed from bottom to top, undulates atmospherically from coral to blue. On close inspection, however, we see that the helmet is also painted, but in a photorealistic manner, a striking departure. I thought of that oddball 1974 Sean Connery film, *Zardoz* and that giant stone head, a rocky edifice that functions as an armory. It invokes Schoultz's sense of ancient futures, just one of many implied narratives.

With 31 works on view, there's much to consider, but the show's clear masterwork is a massive (146 x 388-inch) painting on multiple panels titled *Cathedral*, 2016-2020. Installed in the back of the gallery, it functions as a compendium of Schoultz's concerns, staged illusionistically within a complex of two brick buildings, either open-air or opened-up like an architectural rendering. In them, we see the artist's signature iconography — rattlesnakes, serpents, withered trees, amphora, birds—as well as stained glass, which adds a pop/graphic quality to the complicated mix of styles within the work. While the subject evokes European paintings, its horizontal orientation suggests Asian screens, an association bolstered by the depiction of two of those rock-like helmets set atop a gray rectangle. It feels, at least in that portion, like a Zen garden.



Within this structure, Schoultz painted a wall in which small recreations of many of his works are displayed salon-style. Think of it as a large-scale take on Marcel Duchamp's *Boîte-en-valise*. Hanging amidst this virtual wall of self-representation are images of the continents in various states of connection: a geological history of the planet. Schoultz appears to be tracking tectonic shifts — his own and the world's — which feels about right at this highly unstable juncture.

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Andrew Schoultz: "Mother Nature, Father Time" @ [Hosfelt Gallery](#) through July 11, 2020.

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