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## On exhibit: Steven Pearson's 'Information Overload' at SUNY Adirondack

Steven Pearson's 'Information Overload' a colorful reaction to how we live today



IMAGE 1 OF 7

Steve Pearson's Amalgamation 2010 Acrylic on Paper Mounted on Panel

To artist **Steven Pearson**, the barrage of information pelting our brains is colorful and crazy. Electric yellows, audacious pinks, searing greens and glowing construction oranges grab your attention and disorientate to the point of bewilderment.

Through acrylic, oil and spray paint, the exhibition "Information Overload" at SUNY Adirondack is a glimpse into what Pearson imagines to be the mind interpreting fragments of data sent from emails, texts, Twitter, smartphones and the Internet. They convey a chaotic inner sanctum trying to make sense of it all and are puzzles to be pieced together like our over-connected lives.

Like a tapestry, "The Whole is Greater Than," is an eight-frame panel with myriad forms floating, swooshing, rolling and spinning. On two panels, molecule-like clusters are a series of facts invading the frames only to be interrupted by what appears to be a surveillance tower and a green-and-black field intersected by piercing bar codes.

From above, rusty-olive bricks crash into the same octagonal clusters, transforming two of them into blue and gray contradictions. Then come four rows of chartreuse and red/brown squares, filtering out half of the factoids, which disappear into perfect circles and eventually vanish.

With its angled edges and hypnotic fluidity, the image is like a graffiti-splashed subway car whizzing by. It's hard not to take a ride. Raised in Johnstown and a graduate of The **College of Saint Rose**, Pearson, an associate professor in the art and art history department at **McDaniel College** in Westminster, Md., answered a few questions via email, smartphone and the internet.

Q: How did you come up with the idea to illustrate the "Information Overload?"

A: I started realizing how much information we are bombarded with on a daily basis. It was around the time I got my first smartphone and Facebook account. I haven't had a moment of silence since. I feel art should address the times we live in, and making densely layered, vividly rich compositions felt like an appropriate way to address how chaotic our lives have become.



*The Whole is Greater Than*, 2011. Acrylic and Silk Screen on Panel 96" x 293"

Q: The paintings come across very much as tapestries with a sense of weaving and layering. What's your process?

A: It's mostly an intuitive process, with lots of trial and error, and many revisions. As the layers start to get denser, I start to think about ways to balance the composition with both color and design. I often trace an area of a painting and then either repeat it, or mirror image it within the same painting. This creates immediate connections and conversations within the composition. The painting "Amalgamation" was created entirely from tracings of three earlier paintings combined and recomposed to create an entirely new composition from old information.

Q: You've gone through a number of phases, but one constant is your use of vibrant color. What does color mean to you?

A: Color is in every aspect of life. It causes emotional reactions and responses. It calls forth forgotten memories, and jars us with recollections we'd prefer to forget. It allows us to express who we are. I want color in my paintings to confront you in one moment, and calm you in another.

Q: There are so many references in your paintings, including graphic design, advertising, Pop Art, graffiti, comic books and even old masters. What influences you the most?

A: That question makes me think I have not escaped postmodernism's influence in my art. I think postmodernism's questioning of originality and how we arrive at our ideas has some truth in it. We tend to re-combine our influences to create a new product, and as your question points out, I definitely do this.

Q: Just as varied as your colors and influences are the number of mediums you use. What determines whether it's acrylic, spray or oil paint?

A: I try to pick the medium based on the result I am trying to achieve. Spray paint allows me to cover large areas rather quickly. It has the capacity to be transparent, revealing previous layers. I use acrylic for its fast drying time, which allows me to build my layers in a timelier manner. I use paint markers when I want a controlled line. Keeping the mediums varied allows for spontaneity.

Q: What do you think will be the ultimate impact of digitalization and new media on culture?

A: I think the biggest impact will be on memory and our notions of reality. Our use of our memories is being diminished by our reliance on digital technology, and, at the same time, according to **Viktor Mayer-Schonberger's** book, "Delete," the ability to forget is being compromised by the Internet's capacity to remember. Ultimately this affects the digital personas we present to the world.

**More Information**

**On exhibit**

**"Information Overload"**

When: Through Feb. 21; hours:  
Monday through Thursday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Tuesday through Wednesday 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Where: SUNY Adirondack Visual Arts Gallery, Dearlove Hall, SUNY Adirondack Main Campus, 640 Bay Road, Queensbury

Admission: Free

Info: 832-7738;  
<http://www.sunyacc.edu/studentlife/visualartsgallery>

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*Memory Palace*, 2012. Micron on Duralar. 40" x 120"