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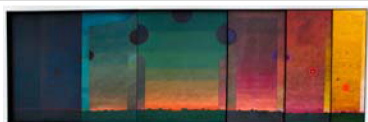
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In Amagansett, art that goes beyond canvas

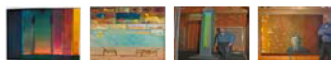
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By Pat Rogers [Sep 8, 2009 11:53 AM](#)

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When talking about art, mixed media usually means an artist combined snippets of paper or found objects with paint, ink or pencil and applied it to canvas or paper. In Jan Sawka's case, it means paintings combined with technology, motion-sensors with sculptural forms and artwork with live performance.

Images have been projected onto skyscrapers with fireworks exploding in the background. Artwork incorporated into theater. Projected art combined with rock concerts. Public installations and cultural center proposals mesh Mr. Sawka's education in art and architecture.

Sometimes, Mr. Sawka works as expected. Paintings are acrylic on canvas. Drawings are ink on paper. No matter how far flung the combination, Mr. Sawka's artistic public and private sorrows.

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(AC) in Amagansett. The antauk Highway. If OVAC director. Yvonne Principi-d remain executive

Mr. Sawka's solo show is meant to introduce the man and his artwork to the Hamptons. The exhibition, A Selected Retrospective of Jan Sawka, is co-presented by OVAC and ACA Galleries of New York, which represents his art. The show presents paintings, drawings, UMU glass interactive artworks and examples of his public projects.

Artworks reflect individuals and their private battles. All of the portraits are inspired by people Mr. Sawka has met and observed over time, gaining insights about their lives and personal stumbling blocks. Multimedia extravaganzas channel cultural history into present triumphs and challenges.

"In my paintings, I deal with isolation and people's sorrows," Mr. Sawka said. "With public art, it has to be uplifting. I try to bring hope and joy with the art that people will live with, that they will see in their daily lives. This is the kind of art that people want. This is art that will remain for generations."

Dueling concerns and interests flow naturally from Mr. Sawka. He was born and grew up in Communist Poland. While there, he was part of an underground intellectual scene where creativity fought to bloom and sprouted through clamped secrecy, he said. Mr. Sawka left Poland in the late seventies and moved to America. His art has taken him around the world to collaborate with movers and shakers in many countries including Japan, Germany and the United Arab Emirates.

His art is part of more than 60 museum collections including the Museum of Modern Art in New York and Japan, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Israeli Museum in Jerusalem, the National Museum in Poland and others. He has exhibited internationally and had more than 100 solo shows.

The exhibition at OVAC puts Mr. Sawka's use of new technology on view. This includes the computer-operated and interactive Calligraphy Tower. It is made from UMU glass, metal, acrylic paint, composites, neon and digital lights. UMU glass or "switchable glass" is laminated glass with liquid crystal interlaced between sheets of glass. The glass changes from transparent to translucent when activated by motion or by an electrical switch.

Calligraphy Tower changes colors randomly. There are painted panels within the tower so the colors and view change over time. The outside is painted with characters and symbols that often appear in Mr. Sawka's paintings. Two other constructions ("Magic Cube #3" and #4) use the same technology to create "interactive paintings."

Also on view are examples of public projects and theatrical spectacles executed and public project



proposals. This includes photographs of an event in Houston designed to celebrate NASA's 40th anniversary. For the occasion, Mr. Sawka projected images of his artwork on skyscrapers in conjunction with a choreographed fireworks display.

There are photographs of a 10-story set design and projected artwork created to commemorate the Grateful Dead's 25th anniversary concert tour. There are images from a multimedia spectacle staged at the Art Tower Mito in Japan. There is a model for a large-scale peace monument meant for installation in Jerusalem.

There is also a proposal for the multimedia spectacle, "The Voyage," which Mr. Sawka hopes will premiere at the Principi farm next year. Elements of "The Voyage" were shown at the 2003 Florence Biennial of Contemporary Art and received an award in Florence. A proposal for the OVAC is also on view and incorporates a building constructed with UMU glass.

A Selected Retrospective of Jan Sawka will remain on view through September 20 at the Ocean View Art Center at Principi Art Barn, 551 Montauk Highway, Amagansett. The gallery is open weekends and by appointment by calling 466-4462. For more information about the artist, visit www.jansawka.com.

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