

Dietrich's Museum and Gallery Exhibitions and Reviews

Untitled solo exhibition. M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, September 1948. No review found in the San Francisco papers.

Solo exhibition "Paintings 1951 – 1955" at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum September-October, 1955. 22 portraits and fantasies.

"Color – high, bold, and raw – is the first thing that hit my eye in Dietrich's paintings. Next I took note of the clear, simple, incisive stylization – often awkward or semi-primitive – with which he shapes figures, outline or pictorial forms. His best works have sharp, exceptional insights and individuality. He has moments of humor or gentleness (as in his 'Dr. Honigbaum') to balance his frequent expressionistic gloom." (Alexander Fried, San Francisco Chronicle, 9/25/55)

"The public Dietrich of daily journalism is backed up by another who uses brush and canvas and exhibits the results of his private labors at infrequent, irregular intervals. The private Dietrich is now public once again in a show at the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum...this painter takes far too much pleasure in human being and human situations to remain long devoted to cubes and squares, but everything he does is suffused with his own humor, his own whimsicality, and a strong sense of design which is clearly a hangover from his abstract days. There are some very strong figure paintings and quite a few paintings of a fantastic and ironic sort. (Two) would make wonderful curtains for the ballet. But their comment on human foibles, their brilliant dissonance of color, and their finely simplified forms provide a highly satisfactory ballet in themselves." (Alfred Frankenstein, San Francisco Chronicle, 9/14/55)

"Henry Dietrich's decorative, stylized paintings have whimsical charm." (Miriam Dungan Cross, Oakland Tribune, 10/9/55)

"His painting deals with large, decorative shapes and rich colors, with beautifully controlled space and line relationship." (E.M. Polley, Vallejo Times-Herald, 9/18/55)

Dietrich also had a number of one-man gallery exhibitions:

"Paintings by Henry Dietrich", Raymond & Raymond Gallery, San Francisco, 7/50

"Among Henry Dietrich's works, I particularly admired "Mid-afternoon Quiet," a painting that is a little reminiscent of Matisse in its own crisp fashion and two sharply patterned studies of backyard scenes. Henry J. Dietrich strikes a fresh, crisp note with his multi-colored patterns of San Francisco roofs." (Alexander Fried, San Francisco Chronicle, 7/9/50)

“Acrylics by Henry J. Dietrich”, 1878 Union Street Gallery, San Francisco, September 26-November 1, 1967

“Henry Dietrich has obviously mused long over the still-lives of Picasso, Miro, and Klee and has made a synthesis of these elements with his own quite remarkable humor and with the new range of light, color, and textural effects offered by the acrylic paints. Dietrich is a visual humorist in the great tradition. His funny animals, birds, children, and still-life objects are not mere jokes or pleasantries; they carry the fine art of visual design into a new and very personal realm of expression. The surety and power of his line are matched by the brightness and variety of his color, and it all adds up to one of the Bay Area’s most endearing artistic personalities.” (Alfred Frankenstein, San Francisco Chronicle, 10/13/67)

“New Paintings – Henry Dietrich”, Ankrum Gallery, Los Angeles, 10/68

“Henry Dietrich, a Bay Area painter whose work seems disarmingly fresh despite its Picassoid overtones, deals beguilingly and gaily with a child’s world. At first glance, his draftsmanship seems childlike but closer examination reveals a sophisticated and successful intent to be artless. Such playful canvases as “Lollypops” and “Seahorses” are examples of pictorial high humor at its best. Like all meaningful humor, Dietrich’s work is seriously created. Perhaps these highly stylized compositions with their bright colors and their flat patterning might be thought of as ideal decorations for a nursery. But they are also ingratiating to all those who have not abandoned all aspects of their childhood.” (Henry J. Seldis and William Wilson, Los Angeles Times, 10/18/68)

“Paintings – Henry Dietrich”, Vorpall Galleries, San Francisco, 6/68

“Dietrich’s overall style comes close to the austere simplification practiced by the founder of Purism, Amedee Ozenfant...he has fashioned an expression that is uniquely his own, characterized by a wit and whimsy that are as much visual as cerebral...Dietrich reduces his images to their simplest, bare-boned shapes, enclosing them in bold outlines and then painting them in solid colors, frequently adding a stippled effect to his textures...all are superbly decorative in design and pattern, but their beguiling surface charms simply add to the sneakiness with which a deeper whimsy, surprise, and occasional feel of vague disquietude insinuates itself into one’s senses.” (Thomas Albright, San Francisco Chronicle)

“Acrylic Paintings by Henry Dietrich”, Marquoit Galleries, San Francisco, 8-9/73

“Marquoit Galleries has just opened one of the most delightful shows current in the Bay Area...painted in flat pattern and bright colors reminiscent of a happier (than later) Picasso, Paul Klee, and Joan Miro. Dietrich, who is no stranger to the exhibition field, has seemingly brought his broad literary interests and prodigious talent to a peak in this show, with humor and wit as the catalyst. He is a marvelous colorist with a flair for the decorative and a selective eye that sees the relationship of objects (albeit somewhat absurd)...this is a show to enjoy.” (E.M. Polley, Vallejo Times-Herald, 8/26/73)

“Henry Dietrich establishes an esthetic posture of both control and spontaneity. Based on real and referential subject matter, his recent acrylics are carefully composed abstractions. As ideograms, his simple depictions of figures, landscapes and objects become a symbolic means for the conveyance of universally comprehensible information. His particular arrangement and combination of the ideograms of this language result simultaneously in straightforward and occasional indirect insights. Considered as a whole, Henry Dietrich’s paintings represent an interesting visual discovery.” (Judith L. Dunham, Artweek, 9/8/73)

“In my book, (Dietrich’s) content and style show great sophistication...for an artist to be able to achieve a successful ‘dialogue’ between realism and the abstract takes a good deal more craftsmanship than do the abstracts or the new realism which are the pillars of the current trends...another of the joys of Dietrich’s work is his genius for pattern and decorative design; the consistent balance of linearity and color and compositional restraint and the clumsy naivete of a ‘primitive.’” (Debbie Chapin, Artweek, 10/6/73)

“A reviewer often gets the idea he is wallowing in botchery as he goes to gallery after gallery. It’s a rare pleasure, therefore, to come upon exhibits that show marked sensitivity. Sensitivity of a different, more elementary sort is presented by local artist Henry Dietrich. His playfulness follows the leads of Picasso, Miro, and Klee, with simplifications of his own in his whimsy and fun. Some of his pictures look like a child’s naïve fancy, on motifs of birds, fish, people, a pseudo-pastoral or garden theme, goats and a monkey smugly dangling his tail. Their use of color areas is freshly soft, brilliant and clear.” (Alexander Fried, “Some Oases of Sensitivity,” San Francisco Examiner, 8/24/73)

In addition, one of his paintings “The Annunciation” was invited and selected for a national exhibit, “Religion and Man in Contemporary Art,” Fiftieth Anniversary of Washington Cathedral, Washington, DC, 11-12/57.

None of his finest work, produced from 1973 through 2000, has ever been seen by the public.