

Matthew Ritchie

Born
1964, London, England

Education
BFA, Camberwell School of Art, London; Boston University, Boston, MA

Lives and Works
New York, NY

Media & Materials
drawing, installation, painting, digital imaging, metal fabrication

Biography
Matthew Ritchie's artistic ambition is to represent the entire universe and the structures of knowledge and belief that we use to visualize it. Ritchie's encyclopedic project stems from his imagination, and references Judaeo-Christian religion, occult practices, Gnostic traditions, and scientific principles. Ritchie's paintings, installations, and narrative threads delineate the universe's formation as well as the attempts and limits of human consciousness to comprehend its vastness. Although often described as a painter, Ritchie creates floor-to-wall installations, free-standing sculpture, Web sites, and short stories, which tie his sprawling works together into a narrative structure. He scans his drawings into a computer so that images can be blown up, taken apart, made smaller or three-dimensional.



The Essential Diagrams, 2002. One of twelve vinyl decals, dimensions variable. Photo © Mathew Ritchie. Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.

"Drawing is very central to the way I work because it can be blown up, taken apart, given to another person to execute, put into a computer, eaten by the computer, spit out by the computer, redrawn as if the computer had thought of your drawing in the first place, shrunk back down to a tiny sketch, turned into a digital game. You can just keep on pushing it, like this infinite machine, which is very hard to do with almost anything else. Even with a painting. A painting becomes a very static fixed thing, like a miniature part of the world, when you're done. But you can make a drawing three-dimensional. You can make it flat. You can turn it into a sphere. You can just keep pushing it and pushing it: all it is, is information. It's just a bunch of marks. Once you understand it as this thing, it becomes very easy to think of it as a material rather than as a precious object."

Self-Portrait in 2064, 2003. Oil and marker on canvas, 6.6 x 8.3' (2 x 2.5 m). Photo by Oren Slor, © Matthew Ritchie. Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.



"I start with a collection of ideas...and I draw out all these different motifs, and then I lay them on top of each other. So I have piles of semi-transparent drawings all layered on top of each other in my studio and they form a kind of tunnel of information. Out of that, you can pull this form that turns into the sculpture or the painting. It's literally like pulling the narrative out of overlaying all of the structures.

That's how I end up with this structure. It's derived from a series of drawings that I scan into the computer and refine through various processes...and send to the sheet-metal shop down the road where it's cut out of metal and assembled into larger structures which are too big for my studio.



The Lytic Circus, 2004. Mixed-media installation, dimensions vary with installation. Installation view: Sao Paulo Biennial XXVI, Sao Paulo, Brazil. © Matthew Ritchie. Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.



"You can always analyze visual art in terms of content or appearance. It's a game to separate them.... Everything in the material world around us has a narrative. To classify visual art as the one medium that shouldn't require effort to understand—to just be able to look at it as pure sensation and walk away—relegates it to the level of a rollercoaster ride. I'm saying, 'Open your eyes and enjoy the ride!'"

Proposition Player, 2003. Installation view at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Texas. Photo by Hester + Hardaway, © Matthew Ritchie. Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.

Activity Suggestions

Adopt some of Ritchie's ideas about drawing to create a collaborative work of art. Select pre-existing drawings or create new ones that explore scale and dimensionality (2-D & 3-D). Implode and explode lines and shapes using a photocopy machine, scanner/computer, or overhead projector to create a unique image that combines the skills and ideas of multiple participants.

Explore different kinds of maps including topographic and geographic, astrological, train, road, or an Internet site map. What are the similarities and differences among them? What information is presented and how is it described? Create a map of your life that includes places, events, and people significant to you.



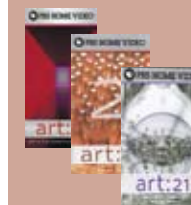
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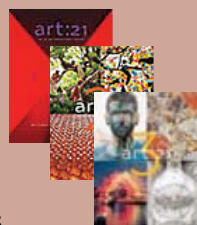


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