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Davis Cone

Forum

Davis Cone's extraordinary hyperrealist paintings are nothing if not cinematic, in both method and motif. The dozen works

here, set in various locales across the United States, depicted the movie theaters that have long been the exclusive subject of Cone's art. Except for the gargantuan golden edifice that is the Chicago Theatre, these acrylic-on-canvas works all represent small Art Deco gems, such as the Cozy Theatre in Wadena, Minnesota. Many were portrayed at sunset, and illuminated by the rosy faux twilight of neon that turns natural color into Technicolor.



Davis Cone, *Cozy/Rainy Day*, 2003, acrylic on canvas, 28½" x 47½". Forum.

Cone uses photographs and high-power magnifying glasses to achieve his effects. The results render crystal-clear minutia in a deep field of focus that presents near and far objects with equal sharpness, a technique that contrasts with a single photograph's limited depth of field. Cone's paintings, like movies, are a composite of many different pictures.

Nothing escapes the artist's attention in *Cozy/Rainy Day* (2003). He captures not merely the words on distant street signs—which occasionally contain his hidden signature—but also the embossed edge of each letter. Cars, people, shops, and soaked streets and sidewalks are all rendered with the vividness of a dream. You can hear the rain, and see the eddies swirling across asphalt and the droplets bouncing against the hood and windshield of the car in the immediate foreground.

Cone generally gets characterized as a photorealist, but since each of his paintings combines details from many different snapshots, "photos-realist" might be more apt. Sadly, Cone's little Main Street movie houses are vanishing, threatened not only by multiplexes, but also by digital technology. Because the communal experience of moviegoing is itself an endangered species, Cone's landscapes may represent the sunset of an era; seen as such, they are history paintings.

—Gerard Haggerty