

Whitney artists in our backyard

Solo shows by 5 Biennial artists on display at Chicago galleries afford best way to experience works

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Philip Hanson at Corbett vs. Dempsey

Hanson is one of the elder statesmen of this year's Biennial, though at 70 he's still a good 20 years short of the oldest. In a day and age where so much art is transmitted and experienced in rapid-fire digital succession, it comes as a relief to be in front of paintings that have no interest in getting with the program. They might seem like it at first, but that's just a bit of shrewd trickery. To fully encounter Hanson's intense canvases, which set words by Shakespeare, William Blake and Emily Dickinson over endless layers of light and color, it's necessary to look with the eyes and also to move with the body and read with the mind — and to do all of this slowly. As in a great poem, a whole world lives in each of these paintings; with every observational shift glimmer new possibilities. Anachronistic styling surprises with wit and verve, as graphic choices hark back not just to Blake's own Romantic pictures but also 1960s psychedelia and 1920s theater marquees.



Philip Hanson, *I'm nobody! Who are you? (Dickinson)*, 2014, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches