

OSU exhibit conjures question: 'Are these tractors sexy?'

John Brandenburg



"Movers and Shapers: Combines, Tractors, and Swathers by Karen Carson" is on view at the Oklahoma State University Museum of Art. [Photo provided]

STILLWATER — They're aren't many subtleties, and that's a good thing, about the large, loosely gestural acrylic paintings of farm machines in Karen Carson's "Movers and Shapers: Combines, Tractors and Swathers" exhibit at the Oklahoma State University Museum of Art.

The 13 mural-sized works, which Carson jokingly calls "my big boyfriends," are in

several rooms of the Postal Plaza Gallery at the museum.

The Los Angeles artist presents these gargantuan machines "from a female point of view as humorous portraits of masculine vanity," a gallery spokesman said.

Works are attached directly to the walls on unstretched canvas, with rich, contrasting colors, applied roughly but

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forcefully, drips and all, almost as if they were still wet.

Operators either can't be seen, or are barely indicated, behind the big, reflecting windows of the cabs, on top of their mighty machines.

Streaks in the sky make a green John Deere tractor seem to be vibrating, warming up or already in motion, in a work, about 10 by 12 feet, called "Big Love."

The same might be said of a blue tractor, which may have a shadowy "Big Friend" at its wheel, under a crimson sky, and a green tractor, under a darker blue sky.

Long strokes of blue paint in the sky accent the horizontal, roughly 3-by-6-foot dimensions of a yellow "New Holland Combine," seen from one side.

A deep red "Chase International Swather," seen from a three-quarters angle, appears to be gobbling up the dirt in a field with its shiny "teeth," under a blue sky.

The exhibit organized by the OSU museum and curated by Los Angeles art critic Michael Duncan is highly recommended during its run through Aug. 29.

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