

Not Your Everyday Sightseeing Tour of Cincinnati Review of Peter Waite's The Cincinnati Series

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Artist Peter Waite approaches architectural panel painting as an experienced tourist explores a new city. He takes in the recommended key sights and then discovers the fascinating hidden places that most tourists and residents miss. His impressions of Cincinnati are embodied in a solo exhibition, *The Cincinnati Series*, at the Carl Solway Gallery in the West End.



PETER WAITE
Old School Boys Pool
2014
acrylic on panel
34 3/4 x 52 inches

Waite, who lives and works in Connecticut, studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Hartford Art School. He is a longtime painter of the built environment, being drawn to iconic public buildings that characterize a particular city or civilization. Michael Solway invited him to survey Cincinnati, a city widely known for its exceptional historic and contemporary architecture.

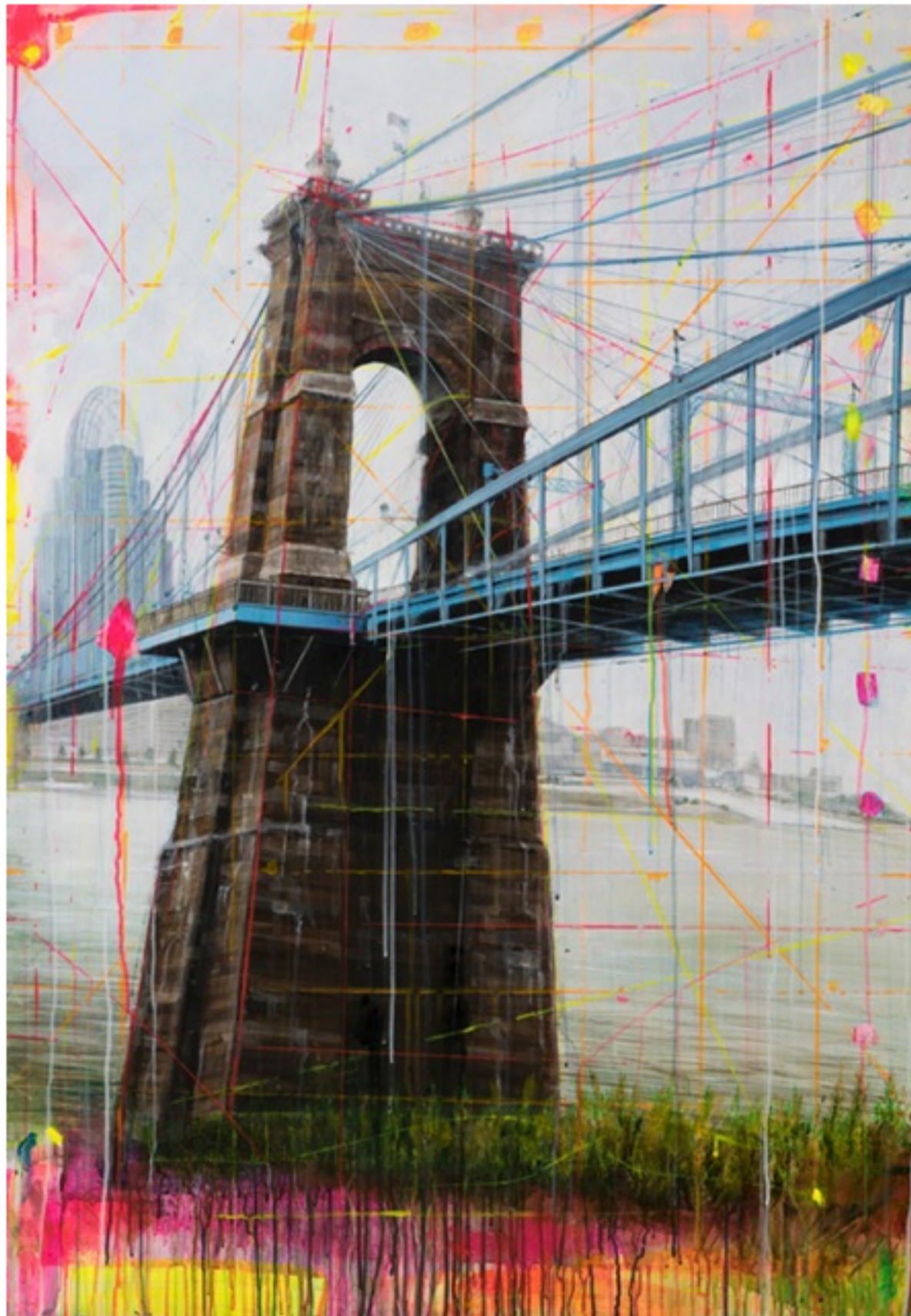
In two recent visits to Cincinnati, Waite focused first upon the usual suspects: Cincinnati Union Terminal, Great American Ballpark, and the John A. Roebling Jr. Suspension Bridge. He depicts the bridge from the Kentucky approach with the Great American Tower across the Ohio drawn into the picture and positioned alongside one of the stone piers. Bolts of color festoon the solid stone structure like spotlights and confetti streamers. It is a remarkable work, which projects the power of place and iconic buildings. Waite also documented lesser known buildings that he found in his urban rambles: the interiors of the old School for the Creative and Performing Arts in Pendleton, the Ohio Book Store on Main Street, and empty buildings in Over-The-Rhine. These evocative, windowless interiors are the most interesting works in the exhibition. Waite demonstrates a masterly handling of the materiality of architectural interiors in his renderings of interiors in the abandoned school. The lonely spaces of empty swimming pools are haunted by the carefully preserved graffiti of former students.



PETER WAITE
Book Store
2015
acrylic on panel
32 x 24 inches

The exterior scenes are more realistic, depicting structures in all their architectural detail. In fact, the panels appear to be paintings of hand-colored photographs with garish washes of luminous color around the edges and in careful grid marks across the surface. They resemble architectural drawings created after the fact.

Waite works in acrylic on hard-surface panels. His style allows him to shift perspectives and distort reality as the various layers of pigment move in and out. The effects are intriguing but also gimmicky. We soon tire of the carefully ruled fuchsia grid marks, which seem devoid of formal or symbolic significance, and detract from the painterly lushness of his three-dimensional building volumes.



PETER WAITE
Bridge
2014
acrylic on panel
52 x 36 inches

One of my favorite paintings portrays a moody interior passage between book stacks in the Ohio Book Store. It captures perfectly the mellow intimacy of the claustrophobic space with its empty chair. Waite has a remarkable talent and sensibility for interior spaces that recall the stillness and luminosity (although without the human presence) of interiors painted by the 17th century Dutch and Flemish masters. His Cincinnati Series is notable less for its architectural cityscapes than for these contemplative nondescript interiors. But Peter Waite's paintings have a fresh, modern appeal that make this exhibition worth a visit. They encourage us to look at our built environment in new ways. The Waite show runs through August 1, at Solway Gallery, 424 Findlay Street, Cincinnati, OH 45214.

-Sue Ann Painter