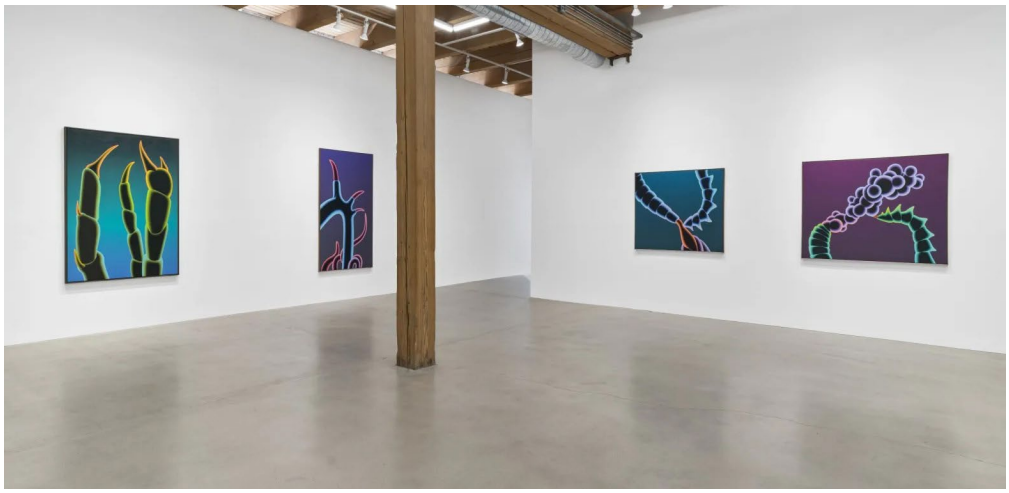
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ARTS & CULTURE

10 must-see shows happening during EXPO Chicago

Critic Pia Singh shares her picks for EXPO Art

April 8, 2024



Richard Wetzel, "Some Must Watch: Paintings 1983-85," Corbett vs. Dempsey. Credit: Robert Chase Heishman

1. Richard Wetzel, "Some Must Watch: Paintings 1983-85," and John Chamberlain, "Black Mountain Poems 1955," at Corbett vs. Dempsey

In the age of high gloss, extreme sharpness, and full-color saturation AI-image generation, Richard Wetzel's 1983-85 paintings do what no machine ever could: infiltrate the consciousness, resist definition, and break the mechanized loop of human-machine perception. A suite of ten immaculately installed, oil-on-masonite paintings keep viewers suspended in disbelief as sharp globular figures evoke multihued, slick, earthly, and exogenous organic matter. Subtly graded backgrounds "sometimes painted 18 hours at a stretch" reveal Wetzel's experience as a visionary, truly sublime Chicago painter. Complex, straightforward abstractions pulse and ooze, hybrid vertebra curve and snap in compositions, making it hard to believe it's taken this long to see the artist's five-decade-long career in one clear moment.

Cleverly paired with John Chamberlain's "Black Mountain Poems 1955," Corbett vs. Dempsey continues to expand our understanding of the infinite formal potential of formal language (spacing, alignment, striking through handwritten words and typewritten characters) and the explosive energy of an abstract expressionist sculptor. Switching between ur-semantic and the transcendent beyond, Wetzel and Chamberlain is dangerously and delightfully the kind of "new" the city offers.

Through 4/27: Tue-Sat 10 AM-5 PM or by appointment, Corbett vs. Dempsey, 2157 W. Fulton, corbettvsdempsey.com/exhibitions