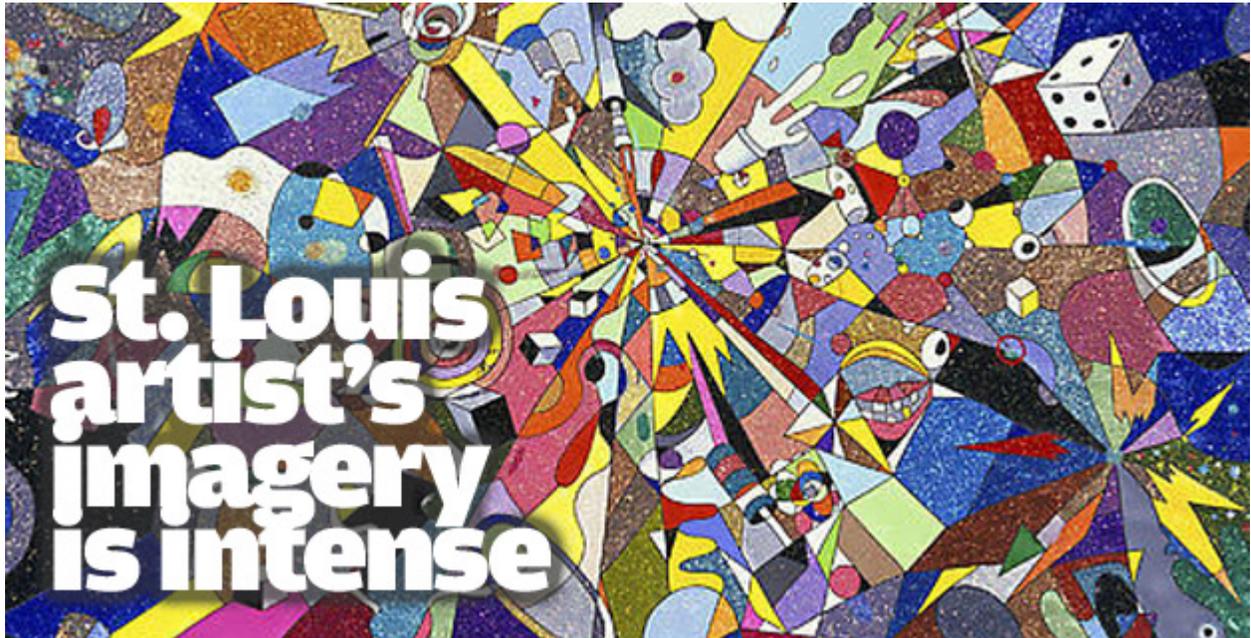


GAGOSIAN GALLERY

St. Louis artist's imagery is intense



By Miriam Moynihan

SPECIAL TO THE POST-DISPATCH

11/06/2009

Artist Tom Friedman has a message in his animated film "REAM," which opens Nov. 6 in a new installation at the St. Louis Art Museum, but he wants people to decide for themselves what to take away from the myriad images that flash on the screen.

"I'm more interested in orchestrating an experience for the viewer," says Friedman, a native St. Louisan. "It's not so much the meaning in it, but how one deciphers what's happening. There's so much information being presented all at one time, it sort of becomes a metaphor of the onslaught of information in our culture."

For Friedman, the film began with a regular ream of paper on which he numbered each page sequentially 1 through 500. He then began to flip through the pages and add

drawings to each, cycling through the ream over and over to create an intense, 20-second loop of images.

"It's not so much of a story, it's bits of information that are presented. It doesn't have a narrative at all," he says.

Friedman, 44, has devoted his career to creating the unexpected out of ordinary objects. His work touches on pop, minimalism and conceptual art, and is highly collectible and regarded.

He refashions media into new forms, in one work making a Buddha from aluminum foil. In another, he drew fragmented pictures of Mickey Mouse to create a dizzying starburst image. He's a particular fan of Styrofoam; he also uses paper, toothpicks, chewing gum, and even his own feces and pubic hair.

A 2007 show at the Gagosian Gallery in Beverly Hills, Calif., sold out its two dozen works before it even opened, with pieces priced up to \$500,000. He has been shown practically worldwide in countries from Turkey to Brazil to Japan.

Charlotte Eyerman, former curator of modern and contemporary art at the St. Louis Art Museum who chose Friedman's work for this exhibit, saw placing the animated film in the museum's New Media Series as a way to expose the artist to a diverse audience of art lovers who may not necessarily seek out edgy art.

"Tom is a genius. He's a philosopher and very witty," says Eyerman, who now works at the Gagosian Gallery. "It's just a very compelling piece. ... Like all great contemporary art, it makes us think about the world with new eyes.

"I really think that Tom Friedman is one of the most important thinkers of our time."

