

ABOUT STEPHEN KEENE

Seeking “huge decorated rooms of endless images of myth and history,” Keene likes to use his paintings “as building blocks to make great expanses and create environments where you don't focus on one piece but on hundreds.”

With paintings floor-to-ceiling and easel-to-easel, Stephen Keene created his preferred environment for this exhibition. The myth and history belonged to Moore College of Art and Design, whose 150th anniversary Keene celebrated with two thousand images. What emerged from Keene's powerful shorthand strokes, however, was a history of Moore that would have made the school's founders blink. Wildly different subjects showed up on the same panel and the artist's pixilated remarks meandered across the painted surfaces. “I had a friend who went to school with Bob Dylan's son but not the one in the Wallflowers David B. said,” reads a Veronese/Raphael/Keene triptych.

Keene's work is engaging, colorful, and humorous, but playing underneath it all are some serious and subversive notes. Keene's doctrine of cheap art intends to undermine the sanctity of high-priced art; instead of a rarity, art is to be a commodity as ordinary and necessary as bread. Also iconoclastic is Keene's take on art school pedagogy—as practiced at Moore and elsewhere until World War II. There is a message behind his Old Masters incongruously combined and labeled with nonsequiturs: *Don't stop and worship at someone else's shrine. Love 'em and leave 'em. Create your own art or buy it; hang it or trade it; make art a working part of your life.*