

Jenice Heo: NEIL YOUNG SERIES



HIPPIE DREAM 30 x 40" Oil on found objects

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– NEIL YOUNG

Jenice Heo: NEIL YOUNG SERIES - The Los Angeles-based artist's collection of assemblage paintings are inspired by the music of Neil Young. In addition to her fine art practice, Heo is also a Grammy award-winning art director.

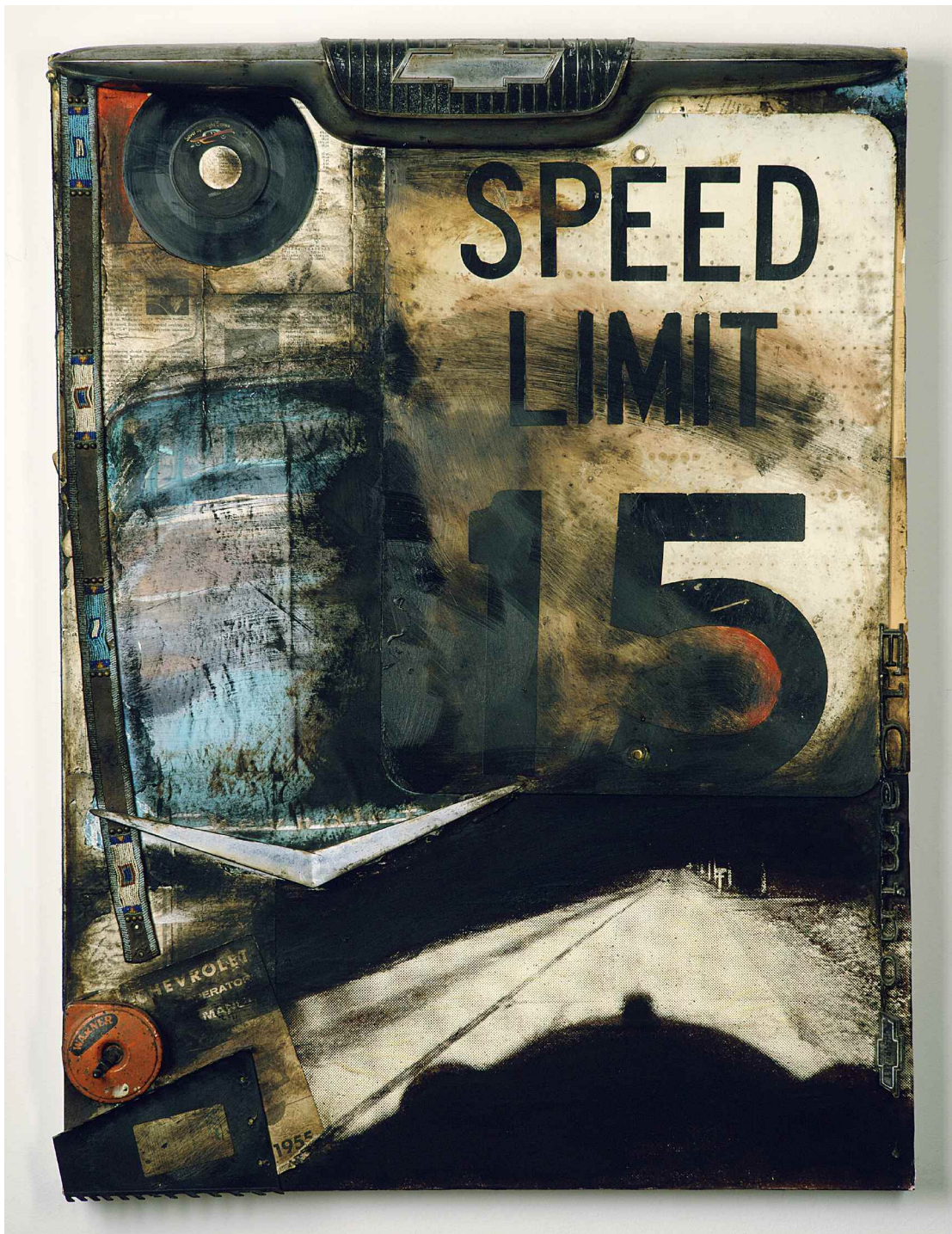
The series consists of 13 pieces inspired by Neil Young and his music, and, as Heo has said, strives to illuminate Young as a person, not to illustrate his songs. In 2010 Heo, her husband and creative partner, Gary Burden along with Neil Young himself won the Grammy Award for Special Packaging, which recognized their extraordinary effort in creating the Neil Young Archives Vol. I Box Set. Heo's small assemblage *NEIL Letters* adorns the top of the box, while her boldly-stroked calligraphic-like painting of the letters N-E-I-L-Y-O-U-N-G graces its sides. The wood framed piece features a series of cards fanned out in chronological order with photographs of Young from age 5 to 27.

Over the years, Heo has been steadily developing as a fine art painter, while, simultaneously working as an album cover artist for many of the most prominent artists in rock and roll music today. A partial list of the musicians with which she has worked include: Neil Young, Conor Oberst (Bright Eyes), Jim James (My Morning Jacket), Beck, Devendra Banhart and the legendary Jerry Lee Lewis.

Heo speaks of Robert Rauschenberg and his assemblages as a driving inspiration behind her work and development as an artist. Young himself introduced her to the work of another American master of assemblage, Wallace Berman, which Heo acknowledges as having directly influenced her painting on the NYA Vol. I Box Set. In her present work, Heo applies oil paint on found objects (often obtained from swap meets, thrift stores and/or ebay), which she then mounts on her canvasses, the flat portions of which she works into richly textured surfaces and image infused compositions. Viewers will also perceive elements of Cubism, Futurism and Abstract Expressionism in Heo's art.

In the **NEIL YOUNG SERIES** classic car parts, model electric toy trains and their tracks, Native American artifacts, rusted metal, vinyl records, pieces of Victorian crazy quilts, song lyrics and old signage, all things Young loves, comprise only some of the objects layered throughout. Though vibrant and new, the pieces also project an aged patina and a wise and wizened soul, and this sense of time past and present seamlessly blended together stands as a significant achievement. Each piece also sensitively evokes the feeling of Neil Young's songs and musical oeuvre, while highlighting meaningful aspects and interests of his life.

Heo's *Train Of Love* was the first of what would become these thirteen Young-inspired assemblages. The piece presents a Native American theme (an important subject matter for Young, and one Heo explores in a variety of ways in many of the show's other works) and features items such as an original Lionel Electric Train box from 1933, model train rails mixed with old guitar strings and a Buffalo nickel.



WHERE IS THE HIGHWAY TONIGHT? 30 x 40" Oil on found objects

Where Is The Highway Tonight greets viewers with an attached photo of Young's old Chevy, a 1955 car manual, and an El Camino nameplate, an old highway sign, and 1890s Crow Indian beaded belt (which mysteriously "disappeared" from her husband's collection of Native American artifacts).

In *Rust Never Sleeps*, Heo gives a visual voice to Young's belief that all cars have a soul and a story to tell. The assemblage employs old rusted car parts - gears, a radiator cap and reflecting lights, as well as old clocks and a 1950s Ontario, Canada license plate.

Ohio sounds an in-depth commentary and historical reminder of the Kent State Massacre of 1970, as well as paying homage to Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young's powerful song that marks that event. It displays small photos of the 4 victims who were murdered by the Ohio National Guard, each next to an antique clock set to noon - the time of a scheduled protest that day. The piece also incorporates original TIME and LIFE covers of this story, copies of the song's original hand-written lyrics, a microphone ironically made by the Kent microphone Company and a photo of a National Guardsman superimposed onto the Bill of Rights.

Hippie Dream, offers a dense, angular, and, perhaps surrealistically-tinged treatment displaying a silhouette of Young's beloved redwood trees, an old rusted harmonica, a classic car owned by Comrie Smith (Young's childhood friend and musical collaborator), a Native American teepee and an American flag - all items that have inspired and informed Young's music.

Speaking of this series, Heo says, "The intriguing part of assemblage is that the whole picture represents the sum of its distinct parts. My intention is that the attached objects retain their individual character and soul, yet contribute toward a gestalt that unifies the entire visual field. I like things to disappear, sometimes *reappear*, but ultimately blend into a patchwork of sorts. What you can't see can be even more important than what you can, and this encourages the viewer to become engaged and create their own interpretation. I don't like to limit or spell things out in my paintings. For example one person interpreted the old Buffalo nickel affixed in my assemblage *Train of Love*, as a visual pun for Buffalo Springfield, the extremely important band Neil Young helped to form in 1966. That pleased me greatly.

"The process of creating these works involves a sometimes intuitive and sometimes more consciously strategized process of building up their surfaces, juxtaposing objects, painting over them, finding the visually rhythm of each piece. Just as the objects from 'the real world' in them project forward in space, I sometimes *hide* small objects under a piece's layers. So there is an outward and inward motion that I'm striving for, that, I hope, gives my paintings the sense of being breathing living things. These hidden objects may also be my way of retaining a little secret of my own, even as I hope people will enjoy my work and, as I've said, relate to it in their own way.

"Certainly music also presents layers of sounds, textures, and meaning, and that 'dangerous' zone, say, between the lyrics in a song that borders what's private and what's personal, material that may be meaningful only to the songwriter versus what he or she wants to publically share, adds an intriguing tension and mystery to a song. Music for me provides a direct link to the creative source...which is one reason why working on The Neil Young Series was so meaningful to me...and hopefully my assemblages share the kind of resolution of complex feeling and emotion into clarity, accessibility, even simplicity in the best sense of the word, that I love so much in Neil Young's music."

Heo began her career as an illustrator and graphic designer after studying at the University of Texas at Austin. After moving to Los Angeles, she began her career as an Art Director in music packaging at Warner Brother Records, followed by positions at A&M Records and Madonna's Maverick Records. Heo's work has been featured in The New York Times, I.D., the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum, AIGA, Communication Arts, Graphis Poster, and HOW among other places.

For the past decade, Heo and her husband, Gary Burden, have worked as partners in R Twerk & Co., where the two have collaborated on the art direction and design of several album covers and films. Burden himself is considered a pioneer of album art, creating covers for such artists as Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, The Doors, Joni Mitchell, Jackson Browne, Eagles and more. In addition to the Grammy Award that he shares with Heo and Young, Burden has also earned four individual Grammy nominations for "Best Package of the Year."

The process of bringing a musician's vision to album art represents a collaborative effort between designer(s) and artist(s), and, over the years, Heo and Burden have developed close friendships with some of the artists with whom they have worked. Indeed, Gary and Neil Young have had a close friendship spanning over 45 years, while also collaborating on album art and a myriad of other projects. Young was the Best Man at Gary and Jenice's wedding.

From Burden's drawings and Heo's digital graphic artwork, the couple work side by side from concept through final print. R Twerk & Co. has recently created cover art for such artists as My Morning Jacket, Bright Eyes, Conor Oberst, Jerry Lee Lewis, Jim James, Rickie Lee Jones, Monsters of Folk and Graham Parker & The Rumour.

A special folio of the **NEIL YOUNG SERIES**, including an in-depth, layered look at the complete collection of paintings, a catalogue essay, and special edition of giclee prints are available for purchase.

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Jenice Heo with *Mideast Vacation* painting from the NEIL YOUNG SERIES

JENICE J HEO NEIL YOUNG SERIES

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Neil Young with 4 assemblage paintings by Jenice Heo
(The painting on the right was chosen for the Grammy Award-winning Neil Young Box Set)