



**MOVERS AND SHAPERS:
Combines, Tractors, and Swathers by Karen Carson**

June 1 - August 29, 2015



7.

This exhibition presents eleven large-scale paintings and related study drawings by mid-career Los Angeles artist, Karen Carson depicting the machines that work behind the scenes to keep our supermarkets stocked and silos full. Carson has lived part-time in rural Montana for the past decade and has explored in her work new ways of dealing with the grandeur of that natural setting. Known for her fearless experimentation, she has created various series that deal with some of the most powerful forces of nature, including forest fires, waterfalls, and windstorms. She turns here to these gigantic motorized masters of nature that have obviated much of the hands-on labor of farming. With virtuosic brushwork and vibrant color, she celebrates these hulk-like machines, relishing their lumbering bodies, wide stances, and geometric appendages. With a sly sense of humor, she humanizes their forms, sublimating their aggressive power so that they appear as friendly, almost sensual giants.

Farm machinery is not often looked at aesthetically and Carson gleefully attacks her unusual subjects with expressionistic brio. Presented in close-up, the bright green, red, and blue acrylic depictions nearly fill their 12-foot expanses of unstretched canvas. Carson highlights the gargantuan size of the farm machines with outlines shimmering from the heat of the day, thus emphasizing their imposing power. Their claw-like treads and massive mouths dominate the turf beneath them. Realistic details and virtuosic brushstrokes that indicate motion mitigate comic-book effects so that the works serve as individuated, yet still comic, portraits. A John Deere tractor in glistening trademark green has a snub-nosed body and an overhanging cab that seems eager to please. Seen from a side angle, the huge tires of a red combine appear as googly-eyes, flirting with the viewer. These “big guys” are unlikely bread winners, yet they are the ones who put food on our tables.

Michael Duncan
Essayist

1. *Big Guy (John Deere #2)* 2013
Acrylic on unstretched canvas
9 ft. 1/2 in. x 12 ft.
2. *Big Love (John Deere #3)* 2013
Acrylic on unstretched canvas
9 ft. 10 in. x 12 ft. 2 in.
3. *Chase International Swather* 2013
Acrylic on unstretched canvas
9 ft. 2 in. x 11 ft. 1 in.
4. *Big Job (Case International Combine)* 2013
Acrylic on unstretched canvas
12 ft. 8 in. x 12 ft. 2 in.
5. *Big Baler (John Deere)* 2013
Acrylic on unstretched canvas
10 ft. 1 in. x 13 ft. 2 in.
6. *John Deere Swather* 2013
Acrylic on unstretched canvas
8 ft. 5 in. x 12 ft. 1 in.
7. *New Holland Combine* 2012
Acrylic on paper, framed
3 ft. 1/4 in. x 6 ft. 7/4 in.
8. *Corn Combine* 2013
Acrylic on paper, framed
3 ft. 2 1/4 in. x 6 ft. 9 1/4 in.
9. *John Dear* 2014
Acrylic on unstretched canvas
7 ft. 5 in. x 12 ft. 1 in.
10. *Strong Guy (John Deere)* 2015
Acrylic on unstretched canvas
9 ft. x 12 ft.
11. *8 Wheels (New Holland)* 2015
Acrylic on unstretched canvas
6 ft. 5 in. x 8 ft.
12. *Ol' 435 (Case International)* 2015
Acrylic on unstretched canvas
6 ft. 5 in. x 8 ft.
13. *Big Friend (New Holland Tractor)* 2015
Acrylic on unstretched canvas
9 ft. 5 in. x 12 ft.
Collection of Shoshanna & Wayne Blank

PHOTO CREDIT: GRANT MUDFORD





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OSU Museum of Art

Monday - Saturday, 11 - 5 pm
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Admission is free

