

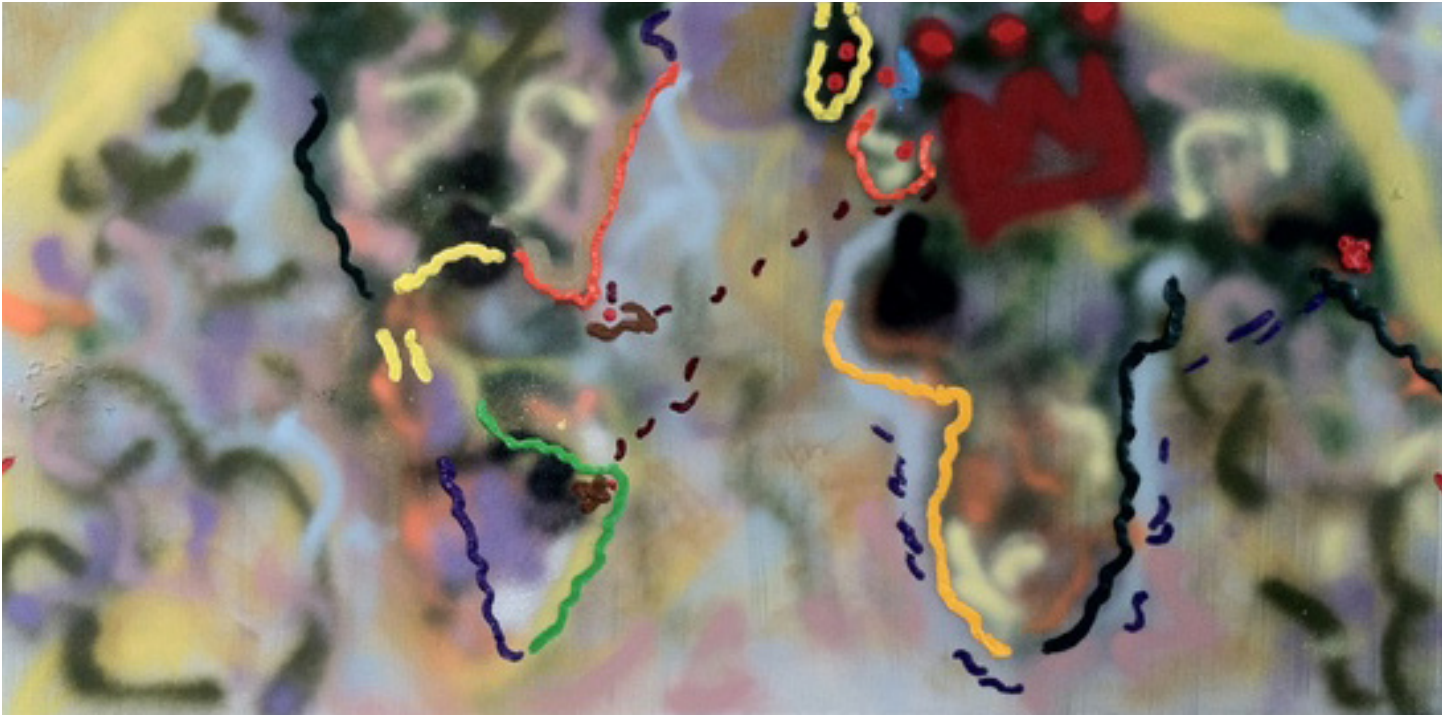
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# HUFFPOST ARTS & CULTURE

## Susan Lizotte: Blood & Treasure

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*FOR KING AND COUNTRY* (2015, OIL AND SPRAY PAINT ON CANVAS, 24 X 48 INCHES). PHOTO: ALAN SHAFFER

In her latest body of work, the curious and expansive series *Mercury*, painter Susan Lizotte both mines and mimics history to construct a poignant and eccentric allegory for the present day. She marries a haute-naïf aesthetic of thick lines, blocky color, proto-Cubist mannerism, and collapsed perspective with a visual lexicon of knights errants and dogged explorers, sea monsters and tall ships, architectural ruins and sketchy outlines of uncharted territories. All of which serves to reconstruct an alternative narrative of the New World and certain rather salacious and cynical, yet consistently under-reported, consequences of its “discovery” for the Old World -- and how those forces and effects continue to shape the world today. Ultimately an indictment of power and its abuses, *Mercury* traces the roots of medical, industrial, environmental, and commercial misbehavior that have been shaping life on earth for 500 years and counting. And it uses art history to do it.



*THREE PRIMARIES* (2015, OIL ON CANVAS, 30" X 48" | *ANGHIARI* (CHARCOAL AND OIL ON CANVAS, 30" X 48")  
PHOTO: ALAN SHAFFER.



In both style and content, Lizotte's modern Medievalism prefigures a new dark age, as the 16th century dawns anew at the start of the 21st. Her striking, emotional rendering of both figure and ground wavers between her premise's representational imperatives and a gravitational pull toward abstraction that fittingly has more in common with Pre-Raphaelite awkwardness than contemporary gestural expression. Her tertiary palette also seems culled from another era, one of parchment and velvet, sea foam and starry skies. Although Lizotte engages this art historical motif to depict geopolitical events from the same era her pointed content references, this gestalt is punctuated by compositional incursions large and small in the form of splashes of neon color, faintly pulsing grids in a dusky sky, and outright anachronisms like spray paint and text that slam into the present day at crucial moments, injecting both chemical clarity and disorienting ambiguity into the conversation.



HE THOUGHT IT WOULD LAST (OIL ON CANVAS, 60" X 40") | SMALL DEVILS" (OIL ON LINEN, 18.5"X 12")

Mercury in ancient mythology was the messenger god, conduit to the underworld, patron of thieves and commerce. It is also a metallic element that is beautiful and poisonous, widely used in early modern medicine, until its nefarious properties were observed. After that it was still used -- just mostly on the unsuspecting. In Lizotte's project, she focuses on its use in Europe after 1500, specifically to treat the particularly virulent strain of syphilis that Columbus and those who came after him managed to bring back to Europe along with their treasure and appetite for glory. This story of karma, irony, disease, greed, racism, fear, technology, and government overreach took place in an age where magic still held sway but humans were increasingly looking to science for answers. In regarding this particular chapter of ancient history, Lizotte cannot help but see the world around her now. Far East, Near East, Middle East. Colonialism, conquest, hubris. Church, state, commerce. Environment, industry, religion. Mercury is a story that continues to unfold across centuries of Western history, its players perennially locked in an intercontinental Game of Thrones complete with kings, pawns, dragons, sex, death, and pirate gold.



Lizotte's work appears in Berlin on June 27, at the Kreuzberg Pavilion, in the ARTRA Curatorial one-day-only exhibition From The Barricades alongside Virginia Broersma, Nick Brown, Emily Counts, Tom Dunn, Ariel Erestingcol, Roni Feldman, Jon Flack, David French, Kio Griffith, Jenny Hager, Raymie Iadevaia, Chris Kuhn, Gil Kuno, Michelle Jane Lee, Esmeralda Montes, Claudia Parducci, Max Presneill, Julia Schwartz, Grant Vetter, Steven Wolkoff, and Jody Zellen.

And closer to home in November at LA's Durden and Ray Gallery, in Depth Charge/Abstracted Frameworks on view November 7-December 4, 2015. Artists provisionally on board include: Tomory Dodge, Christian Rosa, Ingrid Calame, Alex Kroll, Scott Everingham, Britton Tolliver, Joe Reihsen, James Hayward, Max Presneill, Steven Wolkoff, Bryan Ricci.



NEW WORLD II (OIL ON WOOD, 12" X 12")

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAN SHAFFER.