

The Moment

Art

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Crowd Pleaser | Dave Muller at Cowboys Stadium

By *Alix Browne*



Courtesy of Dave Muller

Hungry for art? This mural by Dave Muller hovers over a Cowboys Stadium concession stand.

When the N.F.L. season kicks off this week, Dallas Cowboy fans will have more to ogle than those legendary Cowboys cheerleaders. Under the leadership of Gene Jones (who is married to the Cowboys' owner, Jerry Jones) and a team of curators and advisers, the new \$1.15 billion dollar Cowboys Stadium has been decked with permanent artworks by the likes of Lawrence Weiner, Olafur Eliasson and Dave Muller. The Moment caught up with Muller from his studio in Pasadena, Calif.

Q.

Is a football stadium the most unlikely place you've been commissioned to create a piece of public art?

A.

The only other place I have a commissioned public piece is in the back of the lobby at the New School (66 West 12th Street). So Cowboys Stadium is the most unlikely by a couple orders of magnitude.

Was it a different experience for you creatively thinking about your target audience — Cowboys fans versus, say, art lovers?

I was actually more pressed to come up with something that would hold up over repeated/prolonged viewings by more people than I could imagine. I did a site visit in June. We ran into Jerry Jones, who was waiting for Roger Goodell (commissioner of the N.F.L.). Goodell arrived with his entourage and asked me questions about my proposed piece. While I talked with him, I said that this work would be seen by more people in one week than all the other work I've ever shown combined.

What was the piece you created for the stadium? Were you given any direction in terms of the content, size, scope?

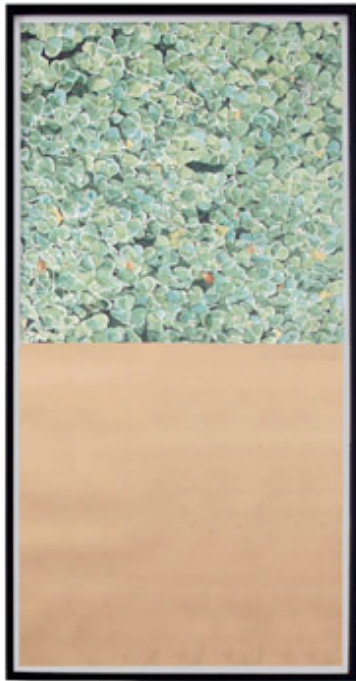
I had free rein. They gave me PDF's of plans for the space over the concession stand. I came back to them with a wall drawing that functioned as a whimsical diagram of a portion of the solar system: the Sun as a yellow rose, Mercury a ball of dead leaves, Venus a ball of popcorn and Earth a ball of clover. I had Brett Lund (my assistant) create a mock-up of the proposed drawing in situ using Photoshop. Six weeks later I was told I had the commission.

The concession stand seems like a prime location because you will have a captive audience standing in line below your piece. Did you take this location into consideration when you came up with your idea?

I guess I could have asked for something else, but I actually liked the challenge of coming up with a project that would appeal to whoever was stuck in line waiting for a BBQ beef sandwich, nachos and a beer. So yes, I did take it into consideration. I'd hate to put anybody through something that I wouldn't do to myself. I looked at the long row of video monitors directly under the proposed wall. With all that hubbub going on I wanted something relatively simple above; a little respite. I've always liked diagrams or maps that spell out your position in relation to things: you are here. Combining that with my long-held interest in astronomy/cosmology and the fact that Cowboys Stadium looks like a spaceship, I came up with depicting a solar diagram with a few twists. Planets are like big balls, although they aren't pointed prolate spheroids like footballs.

Have sports figured into your work in the past?

No. But then again, just this year, I began a series of bifurcated field paintings where the work is titled after a sports team (or teams) that shares the color scheme of the painting. Notre Dame (green and gold) or Raiders/Eagles, circa 1981 (silver, black and green).



Courtesy of Dave Muller

“Notre Dame” shares the team colors of the Fighting Irish.

You are well known for your Top 10 paintings. What halftime playlist would you suggest for the Cowboys fans?

Last year I painted Barack Obama’s Top 10. So maybe that. A presidential playlist for America’s Team.



Courtesy of Dave Muller

“Barack’s Top Ten(Leaning Slightly Left)”

You are a pretty big guy. Did you play football in school?

Yes. Defensive tackle and offensive guard. Made the all-star team (first team, offense and defense) in Marin County Athletic League for the 1981-82 season.

Did they make an attempt to convert you to the Cowboys?

They sent Grace and Frances [Muller's daughters] Dallas Cowboy Cheerleader outfits, Dallas Cowboy Cheerleader bears and Dallas Cowboy Cheerleader Barbies. Thank you very much. I've been offered a free run through the Dallas Cowboys Pro Shop. I do love this shirt:



Courtesy of the Dallas Cowboys