

# RENDERING DISORDER

## DIANA ZIPETO'S 'RESONANCE' GRAPPLES WITH LOSS



### REVIEW

**DIANA ZIPETO:  
RESONANCE**

**GALATEA FINE ART**  
460B HARRISON AVENUE  
#B6  
BOSTON,  
MASSACHUSETTS

**DECEMBER 2 THROUGH  
JANUARY 8, 2023**

Diana Zipeto, the Lowell-based artist who has built her career on the practice of rendering images, was shocked to discover that an MRI is more of a map than a photo. This fact is one that she gleaned through a combination of life experience and creative inquiry: after looking at MRIs capturing the progression of her father's recently diagnosed Alzheimer's, she found herself compelled to understand and render the images herself. Zipeto's solo show, "Resonance," on view at Galatea Fine Arts from December 2 through January 8, takes inspiration from these MRI images to present a portrait of one person's struggle with disease and a loved one's struggle to make sense of what it means.

Though the upcoming exhibit will also feature mixed media pieces, including a LEGO model of an MRI procedure and small plastic model brains, Zipeto's acrylic paintings comprise the main body of the show. Painted in grayscale (and occasionally silver) on canvases ranging from 4" x 4" to 60" to 48", the bold works in "Resonance" depict the unmistakable structures of the head—the brain, the skull, the eyes — and those likely unfamiliar to an untrained eye — blood vessels, nerves, soft tissues. The images seem at once alive and ghostly. Each is a recreation of a "slice" (an MRI image) depicting a different section of the head and/or brain. Certain works, viewed in order, recreate the experience of looking at real MRI images as presented online, where one moves "through" the head from front to back.

In one sequence, a shadowy gray figure is centered on a square canvas, forming a clearly recognizable head and

neck. The images, including "COR 1" and "COR 2," depict a coronal view (from the front to back of the brain). In the first and last two works a voided portion at the back of the head, like a black hole, seems to grow and recede. The remainder of the pieces in "Resonance" portray bony structures and blood vessels, but these simple works are particularly eerie. Zipeto noted that she too finds these images haunting, "because that's kind of what's happening, in a way, is this hollowing out of my dad's head." It is as if her father's mind, that of a chemist, is emptying.

Before Zipeto put paintbrush to canvas, she began a thorough research process. Through partnerships with specialists including a forensic psychiatrist, a neuroscientist and MRI physicist, and an engineering PhD candidate and researcher, the artist learned about the science of MRI technology, the physiology of the brain and the neuroscience of dementia.

Through her research, Zipeto learned that when a patient lies in an MRI machine, the process that takes place is a bit like echolocation: the whirring machine creates a magnetic field in which technicians send radio signals that interact with hydrogen atoms in the brain. These atoms "respond" to the signals, called "excitement," and eventually settle down. By mapping how long this settling process takes, doctors are able to create a constructed image depicting points of the brain and head.

More complex than literal MRIs yet no less technical, beyond the uncanny surfaces of the works in Zipeto's

LEFT: *Coronal 1*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 6" x 6".

RIGHT: *Coronal 2*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 12" x 12".

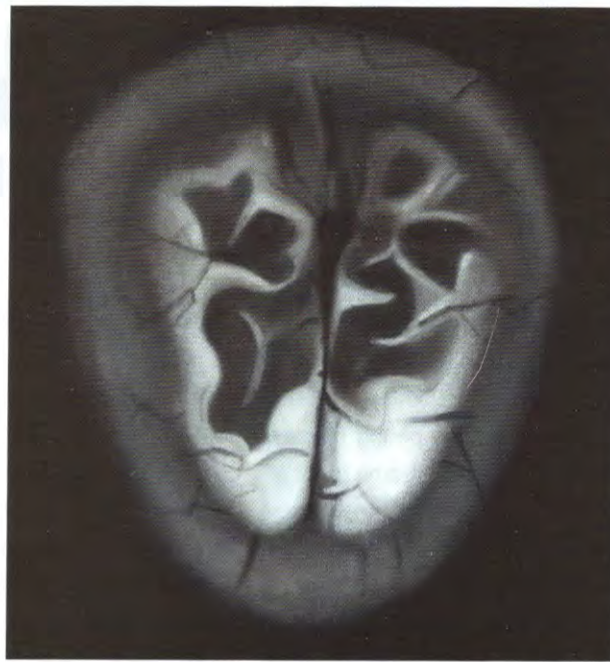
"Resonance" lies an artist's vulnerability, curiosity and strength. These themes serve as a subtle link between her upcoming exhibition and another of her series: "Liberty."

"Liberty," which ran as Artscope's May/June 2020 centerfold, grapples with questions of American identity through the subject of the Statue of Liberty. "I have some similar feelings of dread about my father's illness as I do about the state of democracy and what I feel is an almost unstoppable disease of authoritarianism," the artist said. "Both are terrible things to look at and to look away from."

For a project that is so intensely personal, Zipeto has found grounding in physical, informal artifacts. In her studio, Zipeto has six glass jars taken from the basement of her parents' house. Though they once held peanut butter, they now contain various types of hardware — nails, spring coils, bands of sandpaper — and are only a few of her father's large collection. As evidence "of the kind of things he did and the kind of things he cared about," the items act as entryways that help to connect Zipeto with memories of her father.

Even before she became a practicing artist, she was drawn to these physical materials. "I loved these as a kid," Zipeto said. "They're a staple of my childhood." Now she sees these items as literal and figurative carriers of memory and potential. Originally compelled to see if Lowell Makes (a local non-profit shared community workshop and laboratory) could grind some up for use as a tactile component, Zipeto included a nod to the hardware pieces through the use of silver paint. The impulse is inspired: by doing so she enacts a kind of repatriation of her father's memories — putting them back in his mind.

It is hard to picture "Resonance" not living up to its name. Whether or not viewers walk into Galatea knowing what an MRI is, Zipeto's vividly haunting works are sure to conjure complicated emotions including, perhaps, a mixture of fascination and fear. By presenting a scientific yet intimate subject with graceful bluntness, these works speak to all who



TOP: *Axial 1*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 20" x 16".

BOTTOM: *Coronal 8*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 60" x 48".

have struggled themselves or who have supported others living with brain-related illnesses. The extensive technical and personal research Zipeto conducted as part of her artistic process shine through the final works in "Resonance" as an embrace of both her father (himself a scientist) and a wide community of those affected by neurological disorders.

**Hannah Carrigan**

