

THE ART OF BEER

Deconstructing Art

By DON TSE

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Since 2009, the Boston Beer Co. has been brewing Sam Adams Latitude 48, an IPA brewed with hops grown close to the 48th latitude of the northern hemisphere. In April 2011, the brewery released a "deconstructed" version of the beer. The limited edition 12-pack contained two bottles of each of six beers. The six beers were Latitude 48 itself and five versions of the same beer, each hopped with one of the five hop varieties used to make Latitude 48: Hallertau Mittelfruh, a noble hop from Germany; East Kent Goldings from England; and Ahtanum, Simcoe and Zeus from Washington State.

There are certainly other single-hopped beers out there which, besides providing drinking pleasure, educate beer lovers on the flavors of different hops. But the deconstructed Latitude 48 did not merely show single-hopped beers side-by-side. It took an existing beer and disassembled it so that we could look at its component parts. This allows drinkers to taste not only the flavors of the five different

hops, but how those hops combine to create the flavours of Latitude 48, which is not merely the sum of its parts.

This box of delicious education immediately brought to mind a particular painting that has always fascinated me, Chuck Close's *Mark*. Close (b. 1940) is an American painter most famous for gigantic portraits made through topographic grid painting, where Close divides the canvas into a grid and paints a shape in each cell to create the larger image. *Mark*, by contrast, is made in a manner similar to CMYK photographic reproduction.

"CMYK" is short for the colors cyan, magenta, yellow and black (printers apparently aren't very good at spelling) and describes the process for offset printing. Most color publications, including the one you are holding in your hands right now, are printed by applying layers of just these four colors. Any other colors that you see are merely a result of the combination of the four.

Mark, like most of Close's works, is an enormous painting (108" x 84") and took 14 months to complete between 1978 and

1979. It was painted using only three colors: red (magenta), blue (cyan) and yellow. But it is the manner in which it was painted that is most fascinating. Close only painted one color at a time, using tinted filters over his glasses so he could only see the color he was painting at that time. After applying only red paint, then only blue paint and finally yellow paint, he created a full-color painting many often mistake for a photograph.

The finished product is, of course, amazing. But *Mark* is not as much about the image itself as it is about the process used to make it. It is about how we perceive and about blurring the lines between painting, photography and printing. And it is about how we make wholes from parts, just like the deconstructed Latitude 48.

Mark was the last of Close's paintings using the three-color process. Others include *Kent* (1970), *Susan* (1971), *John* (1971-72) and *Linda* (1975-76). Similarly, I hope the deconstructed Latitude 48 is only the first of a series of deconstructed beers to be produced by Boston Beer Co... cough... Noble Pils... cough... cough.