

# Chicago Tribune

## Angelo Musco's aquarium of wonder

By Lauren Viera, Tribune reporter

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It's rare, I think, to experience a local gallery exhibit that has the power to completely envelop the viewer in the way that an exhibit of larger, museum proportions might. Italian-born contemporary artist Angelo Musco's all-encompassing exhibit at Carrie Secrist Gallery is even larger than a museum show, if you can imagine it. Experiencing it is more like a visit to the deep sea tanks at an aquarium.

Collectively dubbed "Tehom," Hebrew for "the deep" or "abyss," Musco's collection of enormous photographic mosaics feature nude swimmers shimmying in sync like schools of fish, intertwined in passion, struggle or both. The largest of the eight works here, which lends its title to the show, takes over two walls of the gallery's front room.

Large is an understatement. Two years in the making, "Tehom" is 12 feet tall and spans a massive 48 feet, wider even than the gallery's longest wall, and one end of it folds into a corner accordingly. Comprising 22 glossy, gorgeous panels of meticulously digitally edited images, the illustrative mural-like work features swimmers disappearing into dark holes that fade into the distance; some swimmers look as though they're fumbling toward the surface while others seem content to go with the flow. There are between 100,000 and 200,000 swimmers in all, and their nude bodies are positioned so gracefully, they have the realistic effect of swimming together en masse, producing imagery that's both beautiful and mind-boggling. (They're not cheap, either: Purchase "Tehom" or any of the other multipanel pieces here, and you're looking at an investment up to \$200,000.)

Musco's art is a study in the human figure and their innate relationships with each other, from birth onward (it's noted in the artist's statement that he spent two extra months in the womb, emerging as a 14-pound baby). From a distance, Musco's models seem homogenous (I struggled to find one that wasn't Caucasian) as if they're part of some super-race, caught in the throngs of existence and not sure where to head next. Look closer and individual expressions emerge from the masses. No two are alike.

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Angelo Musco, "Tehom," at Carrie Secrist Gallery, 835 W. Washington Blvd., 312-491-0917; [secristgallery.com](http://secristgallery.com). Through July 10

### **Tony Tasset at Kavi Gupta Gallery**

If Mr. Tasset's name rings a bell, it's likely due to the fact that on Wednesday he's scheduled to unveil a giant eyeball on a pedestrian-heavy corner of the Loop. This exhibition overlaps with EYE by serendipity, and serves as a nice primer for understanding the Oak Park-based Tasset's tongue-in-cheek approach to both modernism and minimalism, both of which were poked fun of during the artist's early career of sculpture-making.

There are nine works here spanning the first relevant art-making decade of the Cincinnati native, who in 1986 was fresh from the School of the Art Institute's master's program and already featured in dozens and dozens of group and solo shows. Stepping into Gupta's Tasset-strewn exhibit reminded me of stepping into the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art or the like in the late-'90s: Everything is white, stark and Serious with a capital S.

Tasset, on the other hand, even as a young artist had the ability to turn these concepts on their ear. Box (1993) is just that, perfectly square and made of cardboard and paper tape, sitting just off-center in the room. Also from that year is Pedestal (leveled), Tasset's smirk revealed in the not quite subtle aluminum shim wedged under a corner of this plain white pedestal. In a side room, Pallet (1990) is literal and beautiful — made of pure maple wood, smoothed to touchable perfection — arguably Tasset's calling cards.

"Tony Tasset: Selected Works From 1986-1996 at Kavi Gupta Gallery, 835 W. Washington Blvd., 312-432-0708; [kavigupta.com](http://kavigupta.com). Extended through Aug. 14.

### **'There, now it will last forever' at The Post Family**

Group shows are risky, as there are so many opportunities to go wrong. Too often there are either too many artists represented, crammed onto walls better suited for half the work, or talent isn't consistent. Worse are overarching themes that risk being more conceptual than accurate, forcing

artists into the same space who'd likely never wind up together otherwise, not unlike the singles table at a wedding.

Despite a few pieces and artists worth remembering, unfortunately this romp "into human nature in relation to the natural environment" fails on all accounts.

So, go for the few worth seeing: Jenny Kendler's series of pencil drawings of female nudes and animals (in one, a woman carries a pack of tiny roaming buffaloes on her back); James Ewert Jr.'s map collage, oddly transforming familiar terrain into new territory. Stephen Eichhorn and his ridiculously meticulous plant life collages were likely thrown into the mix for cool factor (Eichhorn is everywhere these days, and rightfully so), but the rest of the lot was, for the most part, painfully amateur. Presuming we are to take co-op galleries seriously, they need to curate equally serious work.

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