



15 Lofts For Sale \$510,000 - \$849,000

NEW ANGELES MONTHLY

[HOME] [CLASSIFIEDS] [PAST ISSUES] [ADVERTISING] [CONTACT] [SOUTHLAND PUBLICATIONS]



HOME

FEATURES

Oh, The Humanity ...
Work by the Art Dorks Collective humanizes the peculiar

INTERVIEW

Mike Davis

EDITORIAL

Editor's Note

Publisher's Note

MUSIC

From Hip Hop to Harry Partch
Grand Performances presents another eclectic lineup for its 2007 Season

SNAPSHOTS

Third Annual Los Angeles Fashion Awards kick-off dinner

Bound and Gagged

Seven Grand Official Opening

FEATURES

Oh, The Humanity ...

Work by the Art Dorks Collective humanizes the peculiar

~ By LEAH LEHMBECK ~



This is not your father's gallery show. Rather, with its fantastical subject matter and graphic-art style, it is much more likely to be your brother's. Running from June 8 to July 6 at Thinkspace Art Gallery in Silver Lake is an exhibition by the Art Dorks Collective, an online group founded by Atlanta-based illustrator, designer and fine artist Brendan Danielsson. The collective began as an Internet support forum for artists in 2004, but when maintenance became too difficult, the artists decided to shut down the forum while continuing the collective that had grown out of it.

Art Dorks tends to attract members with likeminded sensibilities and backgrounds, having in common "growing up in a pop-culture, sci-fi, kung-fu cornucopia of a culture," according to a statement written by Missouri-based member Chris Mostyn. But the only real prerequisite to joining is a sincere dedication to making art. "As a group we attract the best and the brightest, deadbeats and lowlifes, the elderly and mentally deficient ... people from all walks of life," says Danielsson. "We are a train wreck, a freak show, the tallest building in the world. You can't look away because if you did you might go blind. We provide the gift of wonderment. Children flock from miles away only to catch a glimpse. ... They sneak in the back door, press their dirty faces against the glass and sit on each other's shoulders while wearing a trench coat and fake mustache. You will have to brush your teeth after you leave the show or else you'll get cavities. I



Click to View Magazine



PETITE SOPHISTICATE

FITS THE REAL YOU™



FREE SHIPPING

on your online purchase of \$120 or more.

Inspiring collections.
Luxurious fabrics.
The perfect fit.

[See details.](#)

BLUEPRINT

Washington Crossing the Overpass

The Community
Redevelopment Agency
imagines a pedestrian-
friendly South Los
Angeles

WARES

Fashion With Dignity

Tibetan wisdom + haute
couture = Ziji

FILM

Revisiting the Classics

Historic theaters bring
old movies to new
viewers and a new take
on the old silents

FOODSTUFF

Elf Righteous

Local space-rockers
Viva K took a small
concept and made a
huge splash on the Echo
Park dining scene

Bring It!

Masa of Echo Park

In the Drink

Mixville Bar at The
Edendale Grill

CALENDAR

also recommend SPF 30 and a condom.”

With a proclivity towards the stylized and the peculiar, much of the collective’s work reflects a place where conventional picture-making and the Cartoon Network collide. Witness the group’s mascot: an angry, four-eyed, blue-faced, sweating man currently displayed — in various interpretations by the artists — at the front of the gallery. Many of these brave new works, in a paradoxical twist, engage in the most retardataire of genres: portraiture. (Gasp.) The finest pieces include invented creatures, fantastic landscapes, intriguing illustrated tales and innovative techniques. But their most impressive feature is their shared humanity.

While odd creatures and provocative narratives abound in this exhibition, the best work moves beyond the comic-book feel to span the graphic art/fine art divide in a mature and complex manner. Robert Hardgrave’s paintings, for example, are deeply informed by his training in design. Into mazes of black-outlined curls and exceptionally sophisticated palettes we strain and stare, eager for figurative elements to materialize. The artist teases us with a floating eye here or a tumescent hand there, but none of the forms ultimately comes together to assume any recognizable shape. Hardgrave, who hails from Seattle, claims to make it a personal challenge not to create anything specific even as he is painting. As a result, his works both frustrate and tantalize.

Iowa-based painter Anthony Pontius further enhances the show with his richly layered canvases. Moody, Turner-esque landscapes hover beneath ghostlike imagery dotted with deliberate splotches, drips, and dabs and random shocks of color, betraying the presence of the artist. Pontius sees each stratum as demonstrating “different moments, thoughts and sensations,” explaining that together they are like “random layers of dialogue, moments and chance pushed together to reveal the connections and separations that are [at] its core, human.”

In general, however, the Dorks tend to combine their mutual interest in the graphic and fine arts more literally. Danielsson’s well-executed portraits of figures (to call them men and women may be too generous) are fine examples of this approach. The characters straddle the divide between realism and caricature, demonstrating the uncertainties of human behavior. Although the artist seems to delight in the oddities of his figures, their furrowed brows, heavily wrinkled skin and the peculiar narratives in which they find themselves suggest a dreary world that we would do best not to enter.

A similar world of marginalized outsiders is depicted in Travis Louie’s paintings and John Casey’s drawings. Taking as his inspiration the images of circus sideshows and fin-de-siècle magic acts, Louie’s portraits are an exploration in contrasts. The photo-realistic style, managed adeptly by a precise handling of black and white paint, makes the pictures seem like old family photographs. A closer look, however, reveals only the one-eyed and chimp-headed figures of Louie’s own imagination. It is the painter’s style that inspires an association with the familiar, and even with memory, drawing us sympathetically into his freakish world.

In Casey’s work, delicately rendered humanoid figures stand alone, dejected and uncertain in their space, reluctantly subject to our judgment and dismissal. The characters’ physical deformities — a twisted, four-fingered arm or a randomly sprouting tusk — mark their difference from us, while the emotional undertone Casey infuses them with demands compassion rather than repulsion.

15

Lofts For Sale

\$510,000 - \$849,000



www.waringlofts.com

5806 W.
Waring Ave.

Hollywood
CA, 90038

2 Blocks from
Larchmont & Melrose

Morgan Pasco
310-621-2008

Including close to 30 artists and running the gamut from portraiture to narrative, there are nevertheless both stylistic and thematic qualities — a graphic technique, a boyish sensibility — underlying all of the work in this exhibit. The most successful artists transcend the ostensibly simple combination of painting and graphic arts by imbuing their compositions with sincere reflection and their subjects with a meaningful sense of humanity. ★

*Thinkspace Art Gallery, 4210 Santa Monica Blvd., Silver Lake.
(323) 913-3375 or www.thinkspaceartgallery.com*

Leah Lehmbek - A native Angeleno, Leah Lehmbek is a recent Ph.D. recipient in art history who writes, consults and lectures on 19th-, 20th- and 21st-century art.