

Vellum



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JESSICA LICHTENSTEIN HILARY BERSETH
MILJOHN RUPERTO LORD OF THE LOST SODA

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Miljohn Ruperto

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Jessica Lichtenstein

The girls in Jessica Lichtenstein's world rebel against blatant stereotypes. Faithfully appropriated from Japanese manga comics (ie. porno animae), she skillfully takes provocative creatures and turns them into women of empowerment. In striking, labor intensive work, her interpretation of manga, criss crosses taboos and becomes debatable commentary for social morality.

A fine arts graduate of Yale, Lichtenstein came from a background that insisted she had 'a solid career'. This led her into the field of law. After several years of practicing, she hit rock bottom and returned to her first love of art making. Her debut back into the spectrum of creation was taking Barbie-sized Japanese animae dolls and putting them into sculptural, everyday situations. These first pieces showed girls atop a pile of designer bags, in a painting studio or surrounded by beautiful flowers. Each, represented an escape from her own despair at the time of practicing law. "When I'm depressed or in a bad state of mind, I don't throw up darkness and death or weird abstractions. I throw up rainbows."

After some success with the sculptures, she embarked on a series of 3D paintings shaped into single word phrases. In "War", a digital drawing of Jessica's subjects are placed onto solid aluminum in black ink. The "war" portrayed is not of weapons and mass destruction but self confidence issues facing young women in society today. Using word bubbles with stereotypical phrases found in manga books such as; "please take my virginity", "don't forget to kiss me goodbye", and "why did he say I was fat?" are each carefully placed throughout the piece, serving as lyrical ammunition. "I thought it would be interesting to hurl these word bombs at each other in the painting and create a mess of emotions, words, and bombings that are being thrown at us and thrown at each other in our minds."

Similar to "War", "Yum" displays a Bosch-like narrative of aesthetically pleasing creatures. Its portrayal of buxom asian beauties parading up and down a thoroughfare of icing, cake and gumdrops, fills the viewer's mind with suggestive metaphors. Yet to Lichtenstein, it simply continues her mission to create fantastical destinations. "I like building worlds, I like looking at that on the wall and being transported. I think it also comes from the fact that I have a writing background so I like creating narratives."





The obvious notion of lost innocence is portrayed and exploited in "Yum". Perhaps an idea that has been overdone to a degree, it's just another part of Jessica's own development. "I like the whole idea of what you held sacred as a child; carousels, hot air balloons, candy and distorting that in a weird way. I like taking something sacred, twisting it and tormenting it. It shows a loss of innocence, or that type of feeling. A lot of artists will do that by distorting or elongating bodies, putting blood in there, or taking a childhood image and ripping it apart, I think the way i do it is with sexuality."

Considering the explicit nature, there are some that will dismiss her work of any aesthetic value. Not surprisingly, this doesn't concern the artist one bit. In fact, it allows her to accept the inevitable more realistically. "I've been criticized for appropriating other things, but again my idea was not to be blatantly sexual and create these girls on my own, but explore what's out there and explore my own emotions about what's out there. In some places, my stuff is a little too risqué. There's definitely some people who will not buy my art."

On the flip side, Lichtenstein has many supporters who have allowed her to take the path less chosen and exist as an artist. Those who already have bought into her way of thinking anxiously await her next move, one that has both immediate and long term goals. "You have to develop your vocabulary first, so by the end of my career if you just have this one structure and it's oval shaped, on the wall and has no color to it, all of a sudden people will be like 'that's obviously sexual because it's Jessica's' and i won't have to say anything more."





00 Hilary Berseth

Bucks county, Pa. sits on a beautiful foliated area next to the Delaware river. It configures old farmhouses, and rolling hills, some of which are still active in raising horses and livestock. Its lush scenery and isolated atmosphere is almost perfect fodder for horror movie fanatics and as we pass an overgrown corn field one of my travel companions reminds me that there isn't a soul to be seen for miles. My friend then recalls different horror movie scenes and characters which suddenly seem all too familiar as an old family cemetery and then a white abandoned farmhouse come into view. What brings me to these parts is the artist Hilary Berseth who I stumbled upon surfing the web and who has since intrigued me. As we approach our destination, I'm a little apprehensive and suddenly our host comes into view. Berseth walks up to the rock box (my friend's car) holding an ax with a slight grin on his otherwise angelic face. "I told you," laughs my friend Soda. "Yes you did," I reply, not entirely scared nor at ease either.

Turns out the "murder ax" is not for chopping up city folk but for cutting the long grass Berseth was tending to just before we arrived. It makes for a funny introduction which probably means this will be a memorable day. Berseth recently moved into this former farmhouse which we have just driven up to. Like the others nearby, it came fully equipped with Barn (Hilary's studio) and silo. The silo is abandoned except for a pair of pigeons and Hilary wants to know what he should do with it. Since I have a one track mind, I offer art show. My traveling companions who are musicians also have one track minds and suggest shooting a music video. Judging by some of the work Berseth has already accomplished he'll probably think of something entirely original to house there.

If you aren't familiar with Berseth's work then you should know he is probably best known as the artist who makes sculptures with honey bees. His "programmed hives" as he calls them, have been kicking around a few years and received national recognition from a variety of sources. His interest in honey bees stems from a fascination with making art and nature or more specifically making art with the natural process of nature. He first studied honey bee behavior back in 2004, and quickly discovered they favored finishing off combs opposed to starting new ones. This enabled him to arrange starter pieces of waxcomb in such a way that would set them off in different directions. Even though honey bees instinctively make their combs from the top down, if a foundation had been placed in a different direction they would follow that path instead. Bee space, or the empty spaces you see in honeycombs are approximately 5/16" - 3/8" in diameter. If a space they encounter is smaller the bees will fill the gap with sap and secretions called propolis. If the space is larger they will create a comb parallel to the original.



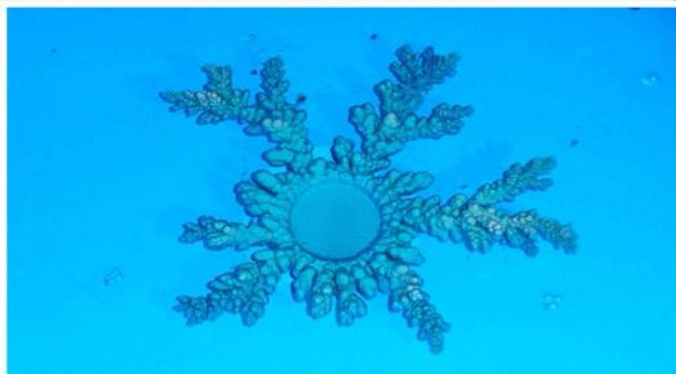


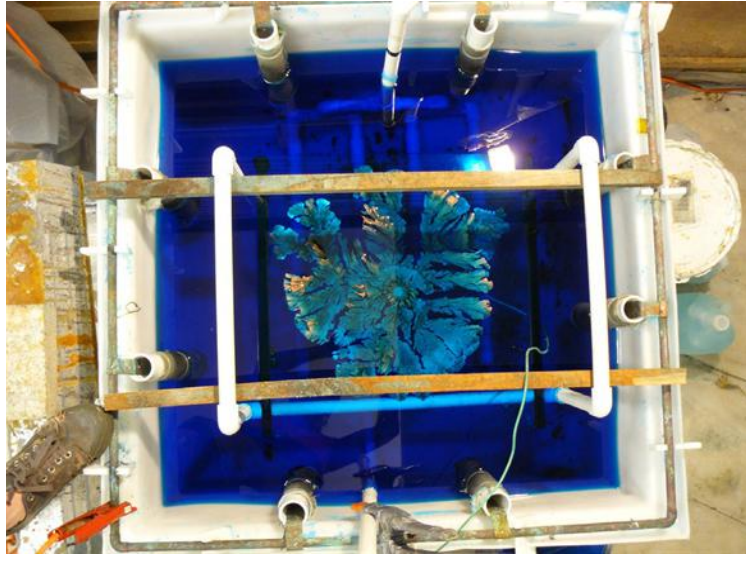
The colony currently active on Berseth's property consists of 20,000 bees. It houses them in white boxed structures each marked with graphics on the front which look similar to an "X" or "O". The bees are designated to a certain box where they will live and create forms. Some of the bee experiments Berseth has conducted have included managed and predictable results while others have interfered with the bees' natural way of working. One of the main conclusions the artist discovered is that although the bees maintain a very structured, disciplined work ethic, there are moments of unpredictability or creativity taking place. This is where his experiments are transformed into art and breakaway from scientific study. Amazing forms have been made, some resembling castles, others square, more typical to honeycomb structure.

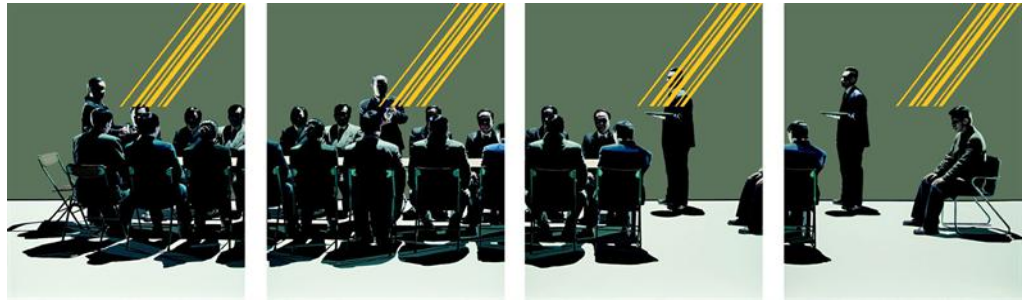
Next to the bee farm is a huge old barn Hilary uses as his studio. Although, still undergoing renovations he's managed to create a small office type space, and today there are several odd looking 3d drawings hanging from its ceiling. Upon closer inspection, they look similar to origami shapes except inside is a perfectly rendered drawing of someone's very distinct expression. They are drawn in a way that optical illusions occur from different angles and are meant to mimic physical gestures the face makes which relate to feelings of anger, surprise, boredom, happiness etc.

Inside the outer barn, the remnants of another project involving copper and electro magnetic fields still stands. Similar to the bees, Berseth wanted to see what would happen if he placed copper inside a tank filled with solution then sent shock waves to affect the copper's ion structure. The end result are sculptures resembling small trees which might have withstood a nuclear winter. They possess a rarified beauty largely resembling 3d drawings in graphite. I'm tempted to touch one but at that precise moment the artist tells us how delicate they are and subject to cracking easily.

We conclude the visit with a chat out back. Hilary says he's thinking of having a pig roast which causes some protest from my travel companions who are vegetarians. He tells us to go to his art show at Eleven Rivington in December, which will comprise the 3d origami-like drawings we saw today. All in all it was a great visit and we leave heading into the direction of New Hope/Lambertville looking to acquire a few more teardrop memories.







According to conceptual artist Wang Jianwei, time warrants our attention. His first solo exhibition in North America, “Time Temple”, currently at The Guggenheim, breaks up the inevitable into three parts; painting/sculpture, film and performance. Wang has been at the forefront of Chinese avant-garde since the 70’s and is considered a pioneer in his experimental use of new media, installation and performance. His practice explores societal reality in art and frequently uses exercises found in live theater preparation.

In one large room of the museum, a series of furniture sized puzzle shaped objects laid skewed about the floor. The pieces resembling huge wooden cogs in a machine or clock were detached from each other but could easily fit into one another. On the left wall a four paneled painting of a corporate meeting with all male executives hung. It presented four different times of day distinguished by a series of yellow slanted lines each portraying the way sunlight moves and enters a room. On the opposite end, a yellow painting with object in its center similar to the furniture like puzzle shapes on the floor hung. In the puzzle shape a type of green matter, familiar to the human brain was painted. When experienced together, these elements speak to the mental, physical and societal nature of time. Time passes and is experienced through daily tasks, distinguished by the sun’s course. It fills cogs in our psyche in order to create reason and order.

Time becomes transformative. The second part of “Time Temple” is a film loosely based on Kafka’s metamorphosis. “The Morning Time Disappeared” follows one person’s journey throughout contemporary China. It reflects change and studies time’s ability to erase one’s former self. The third segment, a performance entitled “Time Ramp Library” will take place at the end. It will procure random museum guests and ask them to partake in Wang’s ever evolving rehearsal. Conversations generated by the museum and writings of Jorge Luis Borges will support.

“I think revolution happens when you distrust anything in its current state including yourself.”
-- Wang JianWei



The New Museum's retrospective of Turner Prize winner Chris Ofili is a mind blower. Ofili, now in his mid forties, has been on the art world radar since 1999, a year he gained notoriety as the one who smeared cow dung on the holy virgin mary. Now almost two decades later, the incident is a mere afterthought. What he brings in his current exhibit Night And Day, is the skill of a great magician.

Three floors were devoted to twenty years of Ofili's work. It started with several dozen framed watercolors entitled "Afro Muses". The portraits, done over a ten year period (1995-2005) depict Ofili's beautiful black men and women. Even though some resembled larger works, Ofili says the small 8x10" paper goods should stand on their own and not be confused with his other paintings. Next were Marcus Garvey inspired canvases from 2002. Ofili uses the same colors of Garvey's Pan African flag; red for the blood of martyrs, black for their skin and green for Africa, the land lost. The paintings themselves tell tales of love and courtship. Similar to constellations glimmering in a deep, lush forest, they harken back to Rousseau and art deco.

In two rare Ofili sculptures, Biblical passages are brought to light. "Annunciation" recounts the angel Gabriel informing Mary of her immaculate conception. Instead of a cerebral foretelling, Ofili creates a viscerally, sexually charged piece showing the angel and virgin in fornicating embrace. Gabriel is created in stunning black bronze and Mary in gold. Ofili was greatly influenced by Fra Angelico's painting of the same incident. However, Ofili's is more akin to greek mythology and has similarities to the sculpture in NY's Rockefeller Center of Atlas holding up the celestial sphere.

In the other, Saint Sebastian remains true to form. The iconic figure is portrayed in literature as a christian martyr. In the tale, he is shot several times with arrows, but does not die. A blind woman nurses him back to health and her sight is restored. Ofili's version shows a kneeling man filled with arrows. Some have said the homoeroticized position could reference the stigmata of certain things. The saint was eventually clubbed to death by his persecutor.

The last time an entire exhibit affected me greatly was in 2005 when the Brooklyn Museum had a Basquiat retrospective. The whole museum was devoted to Warhol's muse and it was an experience to behold. However, no matter how grand, the eventual overloaded feeling of Basquiat, wasn't present in Ofili's work. Maybe because of Ofili's British heritage, he has the sense of a great showman, someone who wants to perform and make every detail count. Each room was carefully curated and themes changed dramatically from space to space.

A set of drawings done not in the studio but at his home, showed a different side to the artist. Similar to art seen in a yoga or new age temple, they repeated lines similar to those found on clam shells, each devoid of figure. Nearby, a series of paintings capturing the moment when day transitions into night were highly inventive. Mostly depicted in shadows the images appear as dreams; masked men on horseback, strange gardens, etc. They were made in the artist's current home base Port Of Spain, Trinidad. On the fourth floor, the title's counterpart were sunny delights. The general consensus for these very large canvases points to the work of Matisse and Gauguin. Brilliant color and native subject matter make them fodder for criticism, yet despite their immensely oversized nature offer a controlled and focused intimacy. In the end, Chris Ofili stands as a great illusionist who can take moments from history, religion and nature and turn them into fantastical scenes of afrocentricity.



CENTRAL BOOKING thanked all of its donors and supporters who contributed to their Chocolate Crowdfunder campaign with a celebration at the gallery. The night's theme; "a bazaar of the eclectic," hosted an array of artists and performers. On hand, were Snow Queen photos by Alyson Pou, who transformed participants into "selfie snowflakes". The angelic wreath-sized flakes elegantly cut and decorated with rhinestone sparkles gave the wearer a chance to relive youthful holiday cheer. Nearby, artist/poet Joseph A.W. Quintela, casted Dissolution Eggs. Inspired by Elizabeth Bishop's Art Of Losing, Joseph encased a word/phrase of your choice into an acidic eggshell filled with resin. The result was an interactive piece that will allow participants the ability to witness the egg gradually transform, dissolve and slip from memory over the course of 20-30 years. Other artists filled the space as wearable books and Marlene Weisman sold jewelry created from found objects.

All donors who pledged \$75 and above gained entrance to the event and enjoyed champagne and artisanal, small batch chocolate conceived by artist/chocolatier Meghan Allyn Johnson. Some of Johnson's treats included Jasmine-Ginger truffles, dipped fruit and slightly spicy pepita bark. The fundraiser was held to assist in continuing CENTRAL BOOKING's innovative programming. Located on Manhattan's lower east side, the gallery is made up of three spaces totaling 2700 sq.ft dedicated to furthering the advancement of Artist books, Art Science, and special events and workshops.

B U R N ' T S O D A H E L A D O
a Vellum Project



10/18/14 SATURDAY NIGHT 6-10pm

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live music by SODA @8pm special HOLLAND HELADO treats

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closing party for the exhibition
B U R N



A 1917 renovated beach house provided a unique backdrop to Vellum's "Burn" Exhibit. The title, taken from a latin phrase "luceo et postea uro" appearing in Steven Thompson's work, translated into "I shine, then burn". The saying is a play on "luceo non uro" or "i shine, not burn" from scotts gaelic. Thompson's rewording refers to the artist's process, a dominating factor in the show. The piece itself, comprised of raw leather cut in a mountainous shape, appeared subdued in the back room, alongside three very different artists. Marcy Brafman's painting of an upside-down fairy troll, portrayed pop icons and their association with our moods and emotions. While Sarah Gamble's all black watercolors positioned everyday figures, with a tinge of the strange. Tedd Nash Pomaski's camping sketches became personal diaries of nature, each depicting a day's moment. In the front area, more drawings by Pomaski including a large graphite piece from his 'Allegory of the Cave' series hung. Carter Davis offered a large, blue, expressionistic painting that depicted the organic significance of mountains and six, small, cardboard drawings, deemed an abstraction of vapor matter. Daniel Herr brought humor with "paint zombie" rendered in true punk rock fashion on black garbage bag. The artist Soda added poppy statement with "Sick bubblegum", combining gum wrappers and glue. As a result, the exhibit had a quirky, slacker vibe and majority of objects were taken from Vellum's private collection.





19 Miljohn Ruperto

Miljohn Ruperto uncovers 'the slipperiness of history'. His knack for finding obscure subject matter then embarking on an odyssey of exhaustive research, examines life's dual dramas; certain reality and one's interpretation of it. His projects, mostly in film, have resulted in major installations around the globe, most notably in the 2014 Whitney Biennial.

If you asked Ruperto what drives him, he'd say ghosts. His favorite is from *The Ring*. According to the artist, this entity is appealing, because of 'a malevolent nature which cannot be satiated.' In typical ghost story narrative, the wronged haunts because of an unresolved issue, then ceases once revealed. In *The Ring*, this doesn't happen. The evil continues after its disclosed. How this factors into Ruperto's work can be interpreted several ways. Take for instance, obscure movie actress Isabel Rosario Cooper. Ms. Cooper is probably best known in the annals of history as the teenage Filipino mistress of General Douglas MacArthur. Her story behind the story centers around Cooper's attempt to become a Hollywood actress after her liaison with the general ended. Her failed success resulted in suicide at age 45.

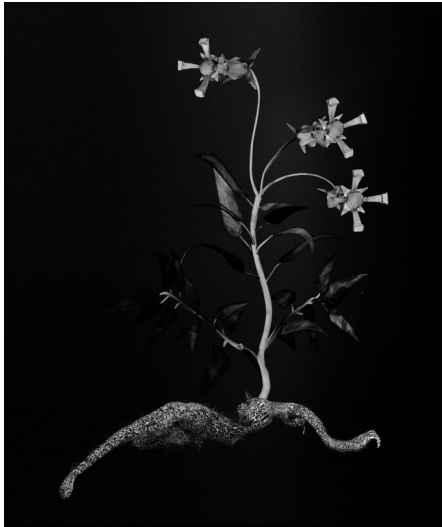
Ruperto's interest in Cooper resulted in a five part installation. Starting with "Appearance", a collection of bit movie parts he spliced together of the actresses roles, the viewer witnesses how in stereotypical nature, each mirrors Cooper's own life. Common to asian actresses in the 30's and 40's the only parts available were exotic dancers, nurses, geishas, and secretaries. In the film, we see Cooper as each of these personas, with no sound and everyone else (except the actress) blurred out.

In "Re-appearance of Isabel Rosario Cooper", a shadowy figure emerges from a dark hallway. Once again, there is no sound, and shot in black and white. It follows standard ghost story narrative where the entity makes itself known. A work on paper entitled "Dimples" (the actresses' nickname) accounts for the third. Written in script form by Ruperto, it recreates Cooper's liaison with MacArthur as a screwball comedy. In "Art of the Show" he re-enacts a day in the life of the actress. There's a famous incident which recounts MacArthur taking out all the clothes he has bought for his mistress and each garment is either some type of lingerie or interior attire. The type of psychological slavery experienced by Cooper coolly reflected by actress Arden Cho. The last segment of the installation is a series of Hollywood photographs taken of Cooper when she was only 25. Each reveals a different part of the actress; head, body, left, right, smile etc. Ruperto wanted the pictures to have 'value', as in 'these were the things she gave away'. His provocative insight into the darker recesses of human desire playing at optimum level.

After Cooper, Ruperto reflected on why he enjoyed making this particular installation. He thought more about ghosts and how a paralleled history usually runs with a shared one. The Voynich Manuscript is one of the oldest books on earth, yet to this day, most of its text is indecipherable. To cryptologists and botanists alike, it has been an ongoing mystery for centuries and yet the manuscript is largely unknown to the general public. The most profound clues to its origins lie in 126 illustrations of botanical studies. Despite the unknown text, it is still unclear what these unusual pictures, some with human faces lurking in-between plants could mean. A few have suggested aliens and old world mexican civilizations. Recently, a British linguist of Arabic descent deciphered ten words. He concluded two words; Taurus and Jasmine, were very similar to the arabic versions.

Yet, despite numerous code breaking attempts, the Voynich remains elusive. The artist along with his collaborator on the project Ulrik Teltøft created 3D models of the studies found in the book which they photographed in black and white. Possessing a Blossfeldt-like aura, they become haunting portraits of a strange phenomenon. Right now, only 19 exist and it continues to be an on-going project for the two. In fact, they're working on a show where new studies will be shown alongside big paintings of a planet known as 55 cancri e. The planet is part of the cancri system which evolves around our sun. The one of interest; 55 e, is thought to be made entirely out of diamonds. This conclusion made by geophysicists and astronomers came about after data suggested large amounts of energy were absorbed when the planet passed in front of the sun. Other possibilities include silica and water deposits.





A recent project completed this past summer studied ugly rocks. Ruperto reunited with animator Aimee de Jongh, who he worked with on the Biennial duck/rabbit piece to make movies of minerals. These became slight animations involving left and right eye movement. A show was produced for the 18th Street Arts Center in Santa Monica, called "Mineral Monsters". It showed ugly rocks and how they related to the theories of George Canguillem, a philosopher of science, who argued that although there is definite logic in science not all of it can be explained. The anthropomorphic shapes of rocks reveal this is true since it would be quite difficult to find two identical minerals.

One new idea of Ruperto's involves a two person dance sequence. The scene he wants to stage would be a recreation from 80's horror movie Possession with Isabelle Adjani. Lasting about five minutes, Ruperto would like to have two dancers play out the scene where Adjani becomes possessed in a train station. "I think its a really great performance and I want to make a symmetrical composition where this mysterious interior is mapped out but still not defined," says Ruperto. "I really like this thing that fits into a structure but is still open ended."





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a.m. Post
Hong Kong News



Celebrity artist Jeff Koons's first major solo exhibition in Asia, "Hulk Elvis," opened on 6. November and ran until 20. December at the Gagosian Gallery. Koons was present at the opening to introduce his pieces featuring the eponymous character "Hulk Elvis," who, in a quote by the artist, is a "guardian" and "protector" figure that straddles "Western and Eastern culture[s]." Despite the series's clear reference to the comic book figure Hulk and rock and roll icon Elvis Presley, Koons claimed that he sees himself as an "international" artist and was inspired to create the works after visiting a Buddhist temple where he realized that the "Eastern" idea of a guardian figure puts less emphasis on "superhero-like" qualities.

The "Hulk Elvis" works are precision-machined bronze sculptures that visually resemble plastic inflatable toys – down to the seams that seemingly connect pieces of "fabric" together. Each work consists of a bronze sculpture of the "Hulk Elvis" put in combination with other elements, including inflatable animals, an organ, a bell, and a cart of flowers. The visually vacuous "Hulk Elvis" figures are in reality made of heavy. The artist suggested that he created this contrast because he sees sex as the primary segregator of people. In these art objects, as well as in his two exhibited paintings, he tried to combine masculine and feminine elements to challenge this idea of sexual segregation.

"Timepieces", Opera Gallery, Hong Kong

"Hulk Elvis", Jeff Koons, Gagosian Gallery, Hong Kong

"Timepieces," an exhibition celebrating Opera Gallery's 20th global anniversary and 10th anniversary in Hong Kong, opened in the gallery's four-storey space on 13. November. Giles Dyan, the founder of the gallery, came to Hong Kong for the milestone celebration that featured more than 50 works of art valued at over HKD 200 million. Shirley Yablonsky, the Director of the Opera Gallery Hong Kong, introduced the exhibition at the opening as a showcase of what sets the gallery apart from its counterparts in terms of the range and value of its collection and its focus on creating an enriching experience for visitors in 19th and 20th century art history.

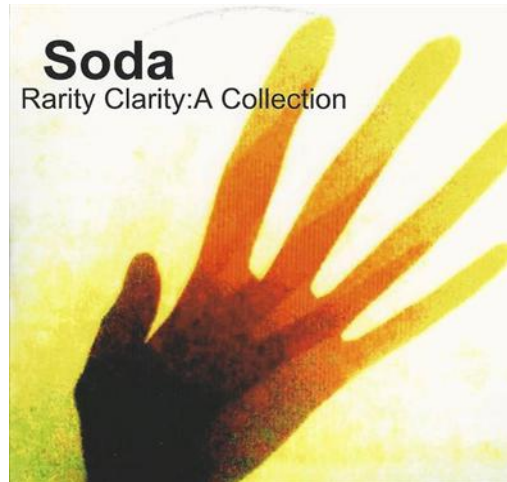
Giles Dyan founded the first Opera Gallery in Singapore in 1994, and since then, the gallery has expanded into an international network of ten galleries from France to Dubai. The gallery started as a local French gallery with hubs in Paris and Singapore, and saw its mission as bringing valuable European art outside of Europe to international audiences. Now in its 20th year of operation, the gallery works closely with different established and emerging artists in its different locations in addition to focusing on European art. With the diverse range of its collection, Opera Gallery offers prospective collectors with different price entry points to fit their budgets and tastes.

The exhibition, which featured works by 20th century European masters such as Renoir, Matisse, Picasso, and Chagall, as well as contemporary icons from Europe and Asia such as Kusama, Chu Teh-Chun and Fernando Botero, amply represented the gallery's characteristic range and diversity reaching across different art historical periods and countries. Walking up the three-level special exhibition in the heart of Hong Kong's financial district, visitors were treated to a wide range of museum-quality art in an intimate setting. The exhibition was structured in such a way as to lead visitors through artworks by famous contemporary masters on the ground floor, then through the works by important European post-war masters on the second floor, and finally through the most valuable "masterpieces" of the exhibition in the gallery's "black room" on the third floor. Some highlights among the major masterpieces on display were the four small-scale paintings by Pierre-Auguste Renoir: the oil landscape Port du Pornic (La Voile blanche), two portraits, Portrait de Pierre Renoir à la capeline and Gabrielle lisant, as well as Deux filles dans un pré (deux femmes dans l'herbe), a plein air scene of two woman figures on the grass.

The "Importance of Staying Quiet," a group show bringing together the conceptual and minimalist works of ten Pakistani artists spanning five decades, opened on Oct. 4 at the Yallay Gallery in the midst of the Occupy Central protests in Hong Kong. The show's curators Umer Butt and Saira Ansar both graduated from the National College of Arts in Lahore – also the alma mater of many of the exhibited artists – and work as a gallery director and artist respectively. Butt and Ansar filled the three rooms at the Yallay Gallery with carefully selected works by five male and five female Pakistani artists: Anwar Shemza, Zahoor Akhlaq, Lala Rukh, Rashid Rana, Hamra Abbas, Sara Salman, Ali Kazim, Ayesha Jatoi, Fahd Burki, and Iqra Tanveer. While most of these artists are emerging artists working in Pakistan and abroad, a few of them are very well known in Pakistani contemporary art, an example being Lala Rukh, an famous artist born in 1948 whose series of 30-second conté-on-paper subtle contours of a male body made between 1983 and 1985 is among the highlights of the exhibition.

The curators stressed that Mughal miniature paintings and the geometric shapes and linear forms of Islamic art are major influences on the artists in the exhibition, and these traditions form the basis of their respective innovations and experiments with conceptual painting and sculpture. Hamra Abbas's Kabba Picture as Misprint 1 and 2 make use of two simplistic black geometric forms which together recall the Kabba to create a work that speaks to different audiences – for instance, people with different religious backgrounds – fundamentally differently. Ayesha Jatoi, another female artist in the show, created a series of pencil outlines on paper, such as Princess Entertained by Lady Musicians, which deconstructs real historic Mughal miniature paintings into geometric planes beneath the bright colours and gold leaves of the original compositions.





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Soda

Every twenty or so years, someone comes along who clearly defines the word 'artist'. A person with god given talent, drive, focus and purity of heart, who through creative endeavors personifies man's ability to strive for intellectual excellence. The artist known as Soda is one of these entities. Not only through music, but also writing and visual art, he has shown excellence as an innovator embarking on a creative journey that has so far lasted twenty years. Like most spiritual journeys, the road hasn't been easy, but through perseverance, drive and mostly blind faith he has kept it going. His strongest suit and perhaps greatest love is music. He boasts an extensive catalogue dating back to 1994. A catacombic mish mash of aural pleasure echoing a childhood filled with everything Elvis, 70's and 80's. Early on in life, he gravitated towards the crooners; Lionel Ritchie, Prince, Bon Jovi and Boy George. And despite being extremely shy about his vocal ability knew he wanted to be like them. One time, when he was little, his mother liking what she heard asked her guests to listen in. "I got so freaked out, that I never sang in front of her again." remembers Soda. "If I had chorale recitals in school it would freak me out so bad."

Eventually he overcame his shyness, and has performed in front of one and many. The earliest known recording of Soda's music is by a group called Bone-onella. Made in his early teens it was the first time his work was captured on tape and sent out for public consumption. "It was a mess!" recalls the singer. "It was out of tune, very alternative, grungy, flannel wearing little boys growing out their hair kind of music. But it was the start of something that's been with me 20 years." The titles speak for themselves "sodium recovery", "basement" "live with me" "nirvana tribute" all lead the listener into familiar teenangsty territory. Definitely a decent start for a bunch of kids. Next, and perhaps a bit more significant was New Mistake, if not so much for the actual band than for its namesake. The name was taken from a track off of Bay Area pop icons Jellyfish's second album Spilt milk. To this day, Soda listens to their music, talks about them and collects any and everything on the band which funnily enough only put out two albums and broke up 20 years ago. They remain one of the most profound influences on him. On the other hand, New Mistake produced dozens of demos and broke up before anything official was made.

The next two bands Soda would start could be described as his professional footprint in the music biz. Violet Daydream was a young band who came close to commercial success but for various reasons remained underground. The nubile produced a self titled ep, and two albums "Meow" and "The Difficulty of Shape", both alternative, grungy sounding cds with a hardcore edge. While the band which followed, His Mighty Robot is perhaps his greatest accomplishment to date in terms of musical scope and creativity. Soda started the group in 2003 a few months after Violet Daydream broke up. "I had just come out of Violet Daydream after six years," he says. "That break, shook me up big time and I took a couple months to think about who I wanted to play with." As Soda remembers, HMR came together very organically. "I started it as a solo thing. I remember the first day of 2003 picking up a guitar again and just started writing. I came out of that writing session with some of the best stuff I've ever written."

The group had minor indie success but the music itself stands as a lasting jewel in the underground music scene. Soda describes the band as "artsy fartsy" which is perfectly accurate and despite much heartache and misfortune, HMR produced one ep ("Open Your Mind") and one lp("The Conflict") both are nothing short of musical masterpieces. Unlike previous work, "The Conflict" became a concept album, following one man's last hours into madness, depression and suicide. In reality, the band lost their original guitarist Izzy Martinez to brain cancer, their final drummer George to suicide and Soda's sidekick and main songwriting partner Heather (H-Rocker) to substance abuse. After seven years, the personal misfortunes of the band took its toll and he ended the HMR chapter.



By chance, he hooked up with TT Taylor on Facebook and after numerous attempts the two finally got into a room and discovered they had a very visceral connection. After that first meeting, Soda started writing furiously and some of his best material was spawned; "The Worth Of A Heart", "This Sinking Ship", and "Tribute" all came to be. The band, (e) motion picture played out for two years, wreaking havoc and breaking hearts (and walls) along the way. Unfortunately, on the eve of their biggest gig to date (opening up for Sponge) the two parted ways.

Instead of hanging up his musical hat for good Soda went on hiatus for a few months and thought about his next move. In doing so, he started searching through old demos and live recordings from his 20 plus years and decided to release a cd of mostly unheard recordings. "Rarity Clarity: a collection" was spawned in the fall of 2014. It comprises 80 minutes and 20 tracks of obscure material from this gifted songwriter. It not only gives the listener an overall perspective of what he has produced but shows the range and quality of his musical vision. Some significant moments include a live recording of His Mighty Robot's "Play Pretend" on Dave Gone's radio show and "Taste", a danceable, electronic joint which is a genre he rarely dabbles in these days.

As Soda looks ahead to the next 20 years, what becomes clearer and clearer is that no matter how, when or where he will find a way to make music. Since the release of "Clarity" he has played a few select shows as a solo artist and is currently working on a new project called Nox Cult.



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Lord Of The Lost



A freezing March moment with LORD OF THE LOST
An interview with Chris "The Lord" Harms with Bo Six
By Soda

Happy I was around 2011 that I discovered these sexy badass Germans, Lord Of The Lost via YouTube. The video for "Sex on Legs" from their second album, Antagony cinched the deal with me about half way through. Shortly after, I ordered the record along with the first, Fears. Listen after listen I thought how great would it be to see this band in the USA. Great, yes. Likely? Probably not. As I watched their popularity grow overseas I thought, hmmm...maybe? Then maybe turned to yes when a friend of mine, Mama Trash and her company Mama Trash Promotions decided to start a Kickstarter campaign and raise the money to get them here. She worked hard, and it happened. They came, they saw...and well, they kicked ass. The following interview is from my time spent with them in Delaware, March 2014 behind the unlikely sports bar they just tore apart on a bitter, bitter March night.

So, how did the Concept/Name for Lord Of The Lost come about?

"Basically I wanted to make music for people who, well, felt lost, like I sometimes have. I didn't want to be above them or on top of them. I wanted to be one of them. It's really about being some sort of spokesperson for those kinds of people. When you get to the core of Lord Of The Lost, you get some pretty serious topics"

I originally found out about you guys through YouTube, the "Sex on Legs" video to be exact. You have some really killer videos; I know you play a big role in putting them together. Do you have any sort of background in film or anything of that nature?

"I don't really have a background in film I just love to make videos. But as the band is growing I cannot keep up the quality so we look for pros because we want to evolve and make better videos".

After spending 2 weeks in America on the road, was it what you hoped it would be? Is it something you can see yourself doing again in the future?

"We tried to not expect anything. It has been great and really cool and a great experience although some nights have been tough but it is healthy for us."

I know you have a new record coming out this year (2014). How do you feel about it? I watched the video for the new single "AfterLife" it seems to be expanding on the vibe that you guys created with your last record, Die Tomorrow.

(Chris) "The 'Afterlife' single is more of a simple song and that's why we picked it ultimately, it's more of a pop song. The rest of the album will be much harder and faster, some of the hardest we have done."

(Bo) "Remember the name 'La Bomba' hahahaha..."

You seem to keep real busy; putting a record out a year is a pretty impressive feat, what's your secret?

(Bo) "No sleeping!"

(Chris) "There are so many bands out there that misunderstand the term Rock and Roll. Except for beer and cigarettes we are drug free. We like to work hard and I don't sleep much. We just have one life and I don't want to waste it."

(Bo) "It's fun, but a different kind of fun because with this band we are really doing something."

(Chris) "And on this tour I already wrote like 4 songs for the next record after this coming one."

Aside from the LOTL records, you have a pretty big discography in your pocket from previous projects too. What of these side or past projects are your favorite?

"I actually started LOTL 12 some odd years ago because of the place I was in; I had some very hard times. I wanted to start something else to take myself out of that, which is why I also started a Glam Rock project (The Pleasures), but I did return to where I belong with this band."

Speaking of other ventures, your most recent is the Harms & Kapelle project. It's a big departure from LOTL, almost kind of dark rockabilly. How did you put this together?

"Tobias Mertens (drummer) is also in this project. So,



I've done music for other German artists but never myself in German so one day I decided I wanted to sing one of these songs and I'm a sucker for that older stuff like Johnny Cash and there is no band in Germany that does this kind of music. The lyrical content still remains pretty dark."

I was super excited to see you play; LOTL is a fairly big production all across the board. Was it difficult to bring this to America from Germany?

"Totally, we had to downsize everything including the crew; with us here it's just the core band."

(Soda) "Kickstarter was how you got over here headed by Mama Trash raising over \$12,000.00 dollars, pretty amazing."

I know you have a new drummer in the band, Tobias, he also plays with you in Harms & Kapelle (mentioned above). These guys that you have in your band are incredibly talented. Tell us a bit about your little army. Let's start with Class as he's been with you the longest. Then Jared, Bo, and finally Tobias.

"Class worked in a guitar store in Hamburg where I was always buying my strings. We were always saying that we would play together one day because we had always liked each other. And Bo, Jared and Tobias have all been my students. As soon as spots in the band became free I grabbed them."

(Soda) "Jared is amazing."

"Yes, he is just about the best musician between us all. He is actually a classically educated drummer, piano is just his hobby, haha."

When you are not doing music is tattooing something else you do as a job? I know you're former guitarist Sebsta has his own shop back home. How long have you been doing that?

"I do Tattooing for fun, I can only do simple stuff. I can draw some lines but I'm really not a tattoo artist. Yes, Sebsta is a tattoo artist and very impressive."

And finally, LOTL seems to be gaining more momentum with each record you do. What's your next big move?

"The next record (From the Flame into the Fire) I wrote with like 7 or 8 different songwriters. I wanted to get inspired, I don't have an ego problem where 'I have to do everything' it helps me to not do the same thing over and over. Next move is to do more tours and festivals in Germany and Europe. What I would really like to do is a classical album. I'd like to put that out in between this and the next record."

Chris "The Lord" Harms is also a teacher in his off time at a private University called SAE Institute for Audio Production and Engineering.

Bo also studies Audio Engineering

The latest Lord Of The Lost album is entitled From the Flame into the Fire which was referenced in this interview before its release.

To find out more visit www.lordofthelost.de



I Am Love's Pillar of salt

I Am Love isn't a religious cult, but a trippy, folksy trio from the Pennsylvania hills. Their self titled cd due for release in Jan 2015, is a collection of backwood melodies which could easily cascade through America's heartland. A mix of dissonant sounds made possible by using unconventional instruments such as zither, sax, banjo and percussion, they offer a unique take on a sometimes hard to define genre, one born of many different hybrids and almost impossible to categorize.

The opening track off IAL's debut, "Pillar Of Salt", witnesses singer/guitarist/zitherist Joshua Christopher channeling Roy Orbison. Noticeably similar in pitch, the singer adds just enough off-key timber to pull it off. In other ditties, his vocals are low and modular setting a spoken word tempo to the poppy, psychedelic beats. Aside from Christopher, the other members in IAL, are Will Whitmire (bass/banjo) and Kris Jackson (percussion/keys/vocals). In recent past, the trio had a rotating ensemble of guest players who added colorful obscurity to the mix, but are now content to stay a threesome.

Following grand 'ol tradition, I Am Love's lyrics engage melancholy tomes of redemption, struggle and misfortune. The first video off the album "Ghost in the hallway" is a moody number which covers all of the above. It reaches a certain crescendo which allows a tinge of the gothic to seep in and take IAL's status to the next level. That said, in brief, the band has a serious yet positive, approach to making music which is simply "to inspire people to be their highest selves." Catch I Am Love on tour in select US cities.

Goste

Hauntingly cinematic is a fine way to describe Goste, but somehow, you would still be missing something. Vocals that recall Tom Waits paired down with Dead Can Dance effects commands a moments notice. The one man act cleverly fuses singer songwriter intent with electronic beats producing a faded hybrid. On his latest ep, aptly entitled "Eugene", Goste adds simple acoustics. A notable track, "Loaded Like A Pistol", could be interpreted a few different ways. But a sense of remorse might be the dominating factor on record. One trait all singer songwriters have is the ability to make you feel. In slurry speech, Goste recounts failed relationships, life lessons and empty hope. Critics might argue he projects through a veil of tranquilizers, but it's more a slowing down to keep the listener engaged. The conversation eventually turns "arty" when it doesn't fit into a set category. Most times, music tagged "art house" stays indifferent and detached. The "Eugene" ep is more complicated. Flashes of warm reflection are followed by cold realization. Occasionally, when combining two opposites you arrive at a positive. This is true for Brooklyn's Goste who sees the world on his own bleak terms, carving an uncompromising niche for himself.




(Not Barry) Manilow

Old skool punk lives in Manilow. The trio hailing from London has a gritty in your face energy, which is right if you prefer the sounds of MC5 and the Sex Pistols. Singer Dean Moston projects a uniquely deadpan vocal style, coming off with just the right amount of 'tude and never sounding jaded. They recently put out a four song ep, Cease And Desist which is a raunchy collection of punk rawk. Everyday topics of drug use, control, and disgust sarcastically fit into a short and sweet rotation. Outstanding track, "Vitamins" (or vitamins if you're British) takes its three chord monte into bluesy territory. The song's infectious grooves will leave you pogoing out the door. The first track off the ep, "Missing" summons Johnny Rotten. The lyrics are pretty straight forward, "I heard you're missing, where did they take you?" Another, "Law Here" intros a funky bass line. Brings back memories of a band that used to play CBs a long time ago called blue, blue, blue. They too combined old skool punk with psychedelic guitar riffs and sprinkling of goth. A ton of acts play this type of music but few can actually pull it off. Manilow has the power which is instantly recognizable when you hear them.

Cosby

Stepping out of the box and longing for a simpler time, two brothers from Richmond, Virginia known as Cosby formed a group inspired by the 80's. In 2013, they released a buzzworthy debut entitled "In Flight". Although warranting a certain assimilation of Simple Minds, A Flock Of Seagulls and Thomas Dolby, Cosby never copy. On the contrary, the songs on the first record sound fresh. There's a nice mellow vibe running throughout the release showing off different musical arrangements and static vocal. Not all of the songs are a throwback though. One track, "Light Of Day" puts them in more contemporary rock company with the likes of New Republic. The song's chorus denotes a serious message and ranked as semi-finalist in an international songwriting contest.

Cosby's newest, "Heartracer" shoots it back hook, line, and sinker into a time warp. The chorus is classic 80's wave and perfect for anyone who missed out on early MTV. The video returns to a time when clubs featured Ms. Pac Man and cheap flood lights as decor. Its boy meets girl plot kicking in standard rhythm. The band doesn't shy away from camping up its effects either. For the shoot, singer Chris Cosby sported ridiculously cool red blinking glasses, while brother Chip, kept it moving with clean cut riffs. But it doesn't feel like an act. The duo is just grooving to a certain beat. Surprising more musicians don't explore the 80's time capsule. There's so much to gain from that period of great pop hooks and upwardly mobile dance magic.



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