

It is difficult to repress a feeling of both relief and hope when stumbling upon a handful of galleries sprouting from the cracks of New York City's sidewalks. Galleries who are making it their mission to save art from being art for art's sake. One of these blossoming spaces beckoning to us is the Ozone Art Gallery.

The Ozone Art Gallery first opened its doors to the world in 1996, but Jonathan Le Vine has only been its director since July of this year. He has made it his goal to bring people closer to art and art a hell of a lot closer to us bipeds. He is doing so with a post-pop melange of styles ranging from surrealism to abstract-figurative art with dadaist tendencies; a tongue numbing mixture deriving from popular culture spiced up in a socio-political context.

Jonathan Le Vine opened the new season with "The Narrative Image," the second in a series breaking the boundaries between illustration and art, between applied art and high art. The first Narrative Image show was exhibited at CBGB's last January, bringing us art from illustrators and comic artists Eric White, Dave Fremont, Danny Hellman, Fiona Smyth and Steven Cerio.

In Narrative Image part 2 we are introduced to the art of illustrators/artists Calef Brown, Melinda Beck, Polly Becker, Jordan Islip, Richard Borge, Christian Clayton, Jonathan Rosen. Because of their highly personalized style and admirable craftsmanship it is hard not to view their work as valid art. Walking through the exhibition is reminiscent of strolling through a cathedral in Europe. One can only imagine what it must have been like to glance up at the stained glass windows a few centuries ago. The purpose of the windows was to make it possible for anybody to understand the story that was being told. In this sense the show is inherently pro-narrative and painstakingly anti-conceptual. Absorbing the Narrative Images is a lot like reading a pop-up picture book; every single image tells us its own story in a straight forward, easy manner. The experience of viewing them however is by no means a shallow one. To summon up the show, Jonathan Le Vine succeeds in making us understand that illustration in the art world is not only a valid art form but an exciting one.

The second show of the season at Ozone is "Lords of The Lowbrow" opening October 7th. This time around we'll be joined on a roller coaster ride by sirs Robert Williams, Joe Coleman, Gary Panter, David Sandlin, Anthony Ausgang, Ron English and Jonathan Shaw. Contrary to what one may assume we are not dealing with lowbrow art but with art with lowbrow subject matter. These guys possess keen trailer park and freak show sensibilities. Certified strippers of American society they throw us into the underbelly of our culture. At their mercy we find ourselves surrounded by kitsch, comic art, pop music, hot rods, rockabillys sporting Nortons and tattoos and priests with nasty habits. Men sweating blood and guts to make us aware of what is relevant to us.

In a time where the line between applied arts and high arts are being blurred it's nice to find a gallery whose focus is simple: commitment to the investment and increased awareness of this visionary new art. Ozone is located at 400 Broome St. (212)965-1719.



painting by Jordan Islip



illustration by Derek Hess

DEREK HESS

NOISEVILLE MUSIC AND ART GALLERY

Review by SOGO LEWIS

Hip shaking. Voluptuous hips grind away atop limbs of sinewy muscle. That is what first struck me upon seeing the art of Derek Hess. Men and women whose pelvic gyrations seem to be causing a war between their clothes; or should I say jeans, since many of Hess' subjects only wear good old American blue denim bellbottoms. I haven't seen much underwear peeking through pants since the last Calvin Klein ad. They might have hammers for heads and welding apparatus attached to their nipples. Such is the world of Derek Hess.

Exhibiting at the Noiseville Music and Art Collectibles Gallery is the work of Ohio native Derek Hess. Hess is one of today's best known rock poster artists. Following the tradition of 1960's psychedelic poster pioneers (such as Rick Griffin and Stanley Mouse) Hess is part of a new generation of artists who mix the heady world of alternative/underground music with in your face visuals. Always excited by art and the rock music scene it was fate that Hess would soon be living above a local tavern which soon followed his booking bands and designing flyers for shows. These beginnings have led him to designing posters and CD covers for such alternative music luminaries as Pearl Jam, White Zombie, John Spencer Blues Explosion and Iggy Pop.

It was easy to see why Hess's art works so well with music. Figures barely stony on the page. One can smell the sweat coming off the paper as figures with densely weaved muscles seem to be moving to a primitive sex beat only they can hear. Characters are viewed from extreme angles which only heightens their thrust of the page. Hess's work is of very consistent; the work I found less interesting were the posters that feature drawings of the musicians themselves. While I found them

cute, it is Hess's non-celebs that I found strong and inspiring. Those works are also the ones that highlight Hess's sly humor. A poster for Pearl Jam features a stage diver in full scuba regalia leaping into a sea of waiting hands. My personal favorite was a work for the band Cop Shoot Cop that portrayed a red hot intense confrontation between law officers over a single donut. Noiseville is located at 122 West 26th St. #901 NYC, NY 10001 (212) 352-1251.