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Tova Celine: Ye Olde Thrifte Shoppe

Wed, Oct 22, 2014

A show of thrift-store paintings from the extensive collection of Tova Celine, a Los Angeles-based clothing designer who has been haunting thrift stores, yard sales and flea markets for 35 years. Reception October 25 at The Good Luck Gallery.



The emphasis of the collection is on portraiture, ranging in subject matter from cats to kings, and in style from the kitsch to the consummate. Poignant, funny, and often remarkably well-executed, these works are made all the more striking by the obscurity of their origins, with many anonymous faces gazing out from weathered frames, and others that contain bizarre, often dreamlike imagery: a childlike cowboy sleeping in an empty room; a tired hand reaching out towards a jug of wine that rests on a rippling surface of tablecloth. These canvases - created far from considerations of art world hustle and removed from traditional notions of aesthetic value and financial gain - hint at lost worlds and stories that will never be told. Viewed en masse they evoke a powerful sense of indeterminate nostalgia.

In recent decades thrift store art has become a quietly influential force in the art world. Such prominent artists as Jim Shaw, Mike Kelley and Martin Kippenberger have acknowledged their debt to it and produced their own renderings of the kind of good/bad art that supposedly reflects the thrift store aesthetic.

It is fun to turn things around and give the gallery over to unknown artists who never imagined their work ending up on a gallery wall, and where art lovers don't expect to find it. The walls will be covered, salon-style, with more than a hundred works selected by Tova's well-trained eye. The show will also include 1960s and 70s High Fire Stoneware from Tova's collection.

