

REGEN PROJECTS

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Los Angeles Times



Photographs from Elliott Hundley / Regen Projects

"CHANGELING," from Elliott Hundley's exhibition at Regen Projects, incorporates oil, encaustic, photographs and collage.

ART REVIEW

Attentive to needs

For several harried afternoons now, I've sought solace in Elliott Hundley's latest exhibition. I can't remember the last time I had this much *fun* looking at painting, assemblage, ceramics, collage, etc.

The show at Regen Projects in Hollywood is part retrospective and part departure: Hundley's previous exhibitions have nearly always taken as their starting point a single text or work of literature, often a classical or modern play, exploded and suspended in riotous mixed-media works with contemporary references. The collage elements begin as photo sessions where the artist's friends and family act out parts of the play under his summary and direction. They don't necessarily read the play themselves, so this part is kind of like an Oulipian game of telephone-meets-dress-up, with neon lights and wearing cheeky handmade costumes, or often nothing at all. They're printed and cut out like paper dolls.

"Echo" is a series of different chambers courting different kinds of attention. Entering the gallery you're greeted first thing by "Her House Smoldering"

A retrospective of Elliott Hundley's work knows that viewers want to have fun.

By CHRISTINA CATHERINE MARTINEZ



"HER House Smoldering" (2011) is like a gate — of foam and bamboo.

(2011), a ruin-like sculpture made of foam cinder blocks held aloft with bamboo scaffolding and crawling with pins — it's a gate, an invitation to Hundley's histories and processes and spaces of play. The central galleries are meant to echo the artist's Chinatown studio but feel like a museum's craft and anthropology departments exploded in the blender. The cool lavender of the foam walls reminds me of the coloring of more sober, historical, conservative art spaces — I'm thinking of the Huntington or the Norton Simon, anywhere old paintings tend to hang on dusty or jewel-toned walls, signifying history or depth.

Speaking of which, I don't like all this talk of the helplessly postmodern flattening affect of collage. Hundley does away with that myopic view right quick, mixing cutouts of his own photography subjects along with the obligatory ads and ephemera, adding the heat of subjective association in lieu of total observational detachment. There is a literal depth too. Get up close and you'll see how he arranges the individual elements of his pinned collages, most of them only a few centimeters in diam. [See Hundley, E6]

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E6 TUESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2023

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Been having fun for years

[Hundley, from E1] eter, along different lengths of the pins. It's unnerving to be the audience for such gestures: operatic in their meticulousness, observable by dint of their tiny optical real estate.

Hundley takes full advantage of his myriad material mediums to offer a sensation rarely associated with modern theater: care. I feel — I'm not sure how else to say it — *cared for* by this work. Call it the transitive property of care. I feel the pleasure of this attentiveness, even if its undercurrent is anxiety (and how could it not be? The show is literally on pins and needles!). It fuels my pleasure in looking, of paying attention to *his* attention. The walls are thrumming with it, mainly through the way the mosaiclike collages wend between the works. Tiny sequins and pictograms are strewn all over the place like seeds thrown to Echo, Hundley's pet parrot and the exhibition's namesake. The pink foam sculpture "Echo" (2022) was made in collaboration with the many bite marks of the parrot's beak. It's collage in the negative.

I spotted the Kool-Aid man — *twice*, across two different works. A minor detail, and probably a coincidence. But Kindor (he has a name) is also an avatar who likes to break the fourth wall. Or any wall.

The star of the show is "Balcony" (2021) a 40-foot-

'Elliott Hundley: Echo'

Where: Regen Projects, 6750 Santa Monica Blvd., L.A.

When: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays. Closed Sundays and Mondays. Through Feb. 19.

Info: regenprojects.com, (310) 276-5424

For your safety

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long mural in the back room, taking as its starting point Jean Genet's satirical 1960s play of the same name. The play follows the comings and goings at an upscale brothel, helmed by Madame Irma, in an unnamed city in the throes of revolution. As the play progresses, the games of power and fantasy within the brothel collapse into the



JOSHUA WHITE Elliott Hundley / Regen Projects

"THE PLAGUE," a 2016 Elliott Hundley piece, layers a bounty of visual detail across 96 by 147 inches of panel.

action of the revolution progressing just outside. Hundley's "Balcony," a medley of aforementioned collage elements interrupted by colorful pools of poured encaustic on large linen panels, is also a collapse of power and play, constructed one tiny element at a time over the course of lockdown. You have to get close and walk the length of it many times, and yet I doubt any two viewers could extract the same experience from it. It's hot and inviting, Hundley plays Madame Irma to whatever fantasies and associations we might bring to this incredible quilt of images.

Though each painting is a stage, "Echo" sometimes

operates like a text in itself. The interstitial collage elements play the role of footnotes, or more accurately, the marginalia of a slightly older, wiser reader revisiting a beloved book. The show spans 22 years of work, and Hundley is kind to both himself and us in mitigating the impulse to edit older works by framing them with these little bits and pieces of elusive references, pinned like butterflies of memory to the margins of making.

Margins — this kind of textuality is always a bit kaleidoscopic, no? A bit freeform, a bit personal? I have many books, scripts and plays in my apartment, the texts wreathed with layers of notations in different

colors; visits from different Christinas I have been.

Here, the anxieties of the past all hang together in *louche* reconciliation. There's a word for reconciliation with the past. Forgiveness? *Oof*. Can you look in the mirror and say, "I forgive you" without throwing up in your mouth a little bit? That's perfectly normal. Go look at these collages instead.

Specifically, take some time in front of the big foam-backed one, "The Plague" (2016). It's puckered with what looks like bright red mouths. For a moment, I thought they were the back-sides of those novelty wax lips that at one point in this country were *somehow* con-

sidered candy. They are in fact hollow plastic tomatoes, halved and bent into the suggestion of lips.

During a walk-through, Hundley explained that he was thinking about the trope of an audience throwing tomatoes at a performer.

Frozen into gummy smiles, these weird mouths demonstrate how the solidity of the self-forgiving clown can take on anything, even the disdain of the audience, catching it like a bullet in the teeth. It may knock some teeth out in the process, but there is nothing scattered that can't be gathered up and put away for later, waiting its turn for salvation from a newer you.