

LOOKBOOKS

Art: Allison Schulnik & Eric Yahnker

By Pricelatimeragah, February 29, 2012



Allison Schulnik and Eric Yahnker are one of the most ingenious and down-to-earth art couples that I know. Each has their own successful and idiosyncratic practice: Allison is best known for her gorgeous, profoundly impastoed paintings and beautifully macabre clay-mation films, while Eric creates insanely-rendered, hyper-realistic colored pencil and graphite drawings, as well as cunningly comedic found-object sculptures. Both artists' work is unlike that of anyone else I have ever seen, which makes it all the more interesting that they are a couple. Schulnik and Yahnker relish in the challenge of rendering technically difficult surfaces and textures, transforming everyday artists' materials into something entirely paradigmatic. Yahnker perfectly depicts food, fur, feces, sequins, sauces, water and mirrored surfaces using only pencil, while Schulnik turns layer upon sculptural layer of oil paint and clay into unearthly, seductive and tactile expanses.

Lest one start to think these kids are surface-oriented one trick ponies, their subject matter and underlying connotations deliver equally impactful content. With his whip-smart satire and slapstick critique of pop culture, Americana and politics (he worked on *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*), Yahnker captivates both the intellectual and the goofball in all of us. Schulnik's paintings, ceramic sculptures and films focus on darkly romantic and mysterious subjects—the classical elements, netherworldly characters or forces, flora, fauna and mythological creatures—brought to life in a sanguine light. She says, “my fixation on these characters is not intended to exploit deficiencies, but to find valor in adversity. Hobo clowns, misshapen animals or alien beasts, they are typically built upon a human frame, drawing from film and dance. I like to blend earthly fact, blatant fiction and lots of oil paint to form a stage of tragedy, farce, and raw, ominous beauty -- at times capturing otherworld buffoonery, and other times presenting a simple earthly dignified moment.”

Yahnker studied journalism at the University of Southern California prior to receiving his BFA in animation from the California Institute of the Arts; Schulnik received her BFA in experimental animation (also from CalArts). Schulnik's work can be seen in her upcoming solo exhibition at Mark Moore Gallery in LA from May 26 – July 7, 2012 and in the public collections of the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, The Chaney Family Collection, Musée de Beaux Arts Montreal and the Laguna Art Museum. Yahnker has forthcoming solo exhibitions at The Armory Show in NYC March 8 - 11 with Ambach & Rice gallery and the aptly-titled “Virgin Birth n' Turf” at The Hole, NYC in September 2012.

Full Name: Allison Jean Schulnik | **Place of Birth:** San Diego, CA | **Astrological Sign:** Libra

How did your interest in art begin? Pretty much since I was born I never really had a chance to be anything else, because almost everyone in my family is an artist of some kind.

How did you meet one another? We met during my second year at CalArts. He basically harassed me into submission. He would yell things at me in the hallway, like about the availability of his room, if I ever needed somewhere to sleep, but not quite in those words.

What is the correlation between your artwork and your relationship? We are very different people, who like to work very independently, and make very different work. But it's impossible for everything to not all interweave itself together, being that for both of us our work is a 24/7 obsession thing. We talk about our work all the time. So like Donny Hathaway says, “Everything is everything”.

How does love (or the idea of love) affect your art? I don't know that I could work (or even be alive) without love in my life. I think the more love I have in my life, the more I enjoy working and the better the work is. So I've been hoarding it up.

Are your practices inspired in any way by one another? Definitely for me, yes. Eric is the most inspiring person I know. I would probably not be making the work I am making if I had never met him.

Favorite object in your studio? My stuffed mallard duck with a broken neck.

Favorite historical artwork? Too hard to choose one. I shall give you one of my many favorites. “The Dog” by Goya, circa 1819-1823.