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Review: Trenton Doyle Hancock: The Wayward Thinker

By Steven Cairns

Trenton Doyle Hancock is a storyteller and mythmaker – a highbrow comic book artist struggling with a complex psyche and an unruly inner child. His conviction is admirable, developing a narrative based on characters that have remained his focus since the beginning of his career. To refer to him as an illustrator is unavoidable, but is he any more than this? This exhibition defiantly ventures forth into a comic book of outsized proportions and is appealing for its simple, vulnerable qualities.

Both galleries present a selection of Hancock's drawings and painting: up-to-date, colourful, derivations – a poppy mix of Salvador Dali and Hans Bellmer. 'Miracle Machine #9 or the Furnace That Burned Together Goodness', hangs altar-like at one end

of the lower gallery. Part drawing, painting and collage, this piece, along with similar works, are at sea on the scrawled narration painted on the gallery walls. Upstairs, 'Give 'em an Inch and They'll Take a Foot', is one of his most grotesque works – a phallus-cum-hand excreting fluid. Hinting at psychosexual tensions, Hancock reveals a darker, more serious side to his practice.

Curiously, upstairs, a lone sculpture punctuates the flow of the other works. A single arm holding a bucket of Pepto Bismal extends into limbo, literally. However, Hancock's other works provide an enthralling, easily accessible continuity that extends throughout the gallery, and not surprisingly into the pages of his accompanying books.



Trenton Doyle Hancock, *Miracle Machine #7*, 2005, ink and acrylic on paper, 10 X 9 inches