

# The Fruitmarket Gallery

# Trenton Doyle Hancock

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**The Fruitmarket Gallery is proud to present the first European solo exhibition of the work of Trenton Doyle Hancock, a young American artist whose paintings, drawings, assemblages, installations, sculptures and objects pack a powerful visual and imaginative punch.**

Born in 1974 in Oklahoma City, Hancock grew up the son of a Baptist minister in the semi-rural town of Paris, Texas. At school, he was interested in video games, comic books and drawing, and combined two of these by working as a cartoonist for first the school and then the university newspaper. At university, he studied illustration, then drawing and painting, and cites as his formative influences *Raw* magazine (a magazine uniting high and low culture, showcasing cutting-edge cartoonists as well as, in Hancock's words, 'painters with a bent for explicit narrative') and the *Garbage Pail Kids*. Profoundly committed to drawing, Hancock was uncertain as to what direction his career might take until the funding for the university newspaper was cut and he

found himself out of a job. At that point, he recalls, 'I formulated a mission statement. The idea was to have a painting project in which I could freely jump between modes of production and maintain a set of characters that inhabit the work'.

All Hancock's mature work has been driven by this mission statement, and is produced in the context of an epic, ongoing saga. This exhibition brings together three episodes in this saga, which turns autobiography into mythology in a classic battle between good and evil. On one side are the peace-loving mounds, the illegitimate progeny of prehistoric ape man *Homerbuctas* and a flower meadow. Mounds are covered in black and white fur, are rooted to the ground and ooze moundmeat, a pink substance suspiciously reminiscent of *Peptobismol*. On the other side are the evil vegans, a race of in-bred descendants of *Homerbuctas*'s legitimate children, jealous of the mounds' relationship to their father. Due to generations of inbreeding, vegans have lost the ability to see in colour and have bones in strange places. They gather together underground, and attack mounds whenever they can in order to bleed them of moundmeat which they convert into *tofu*.

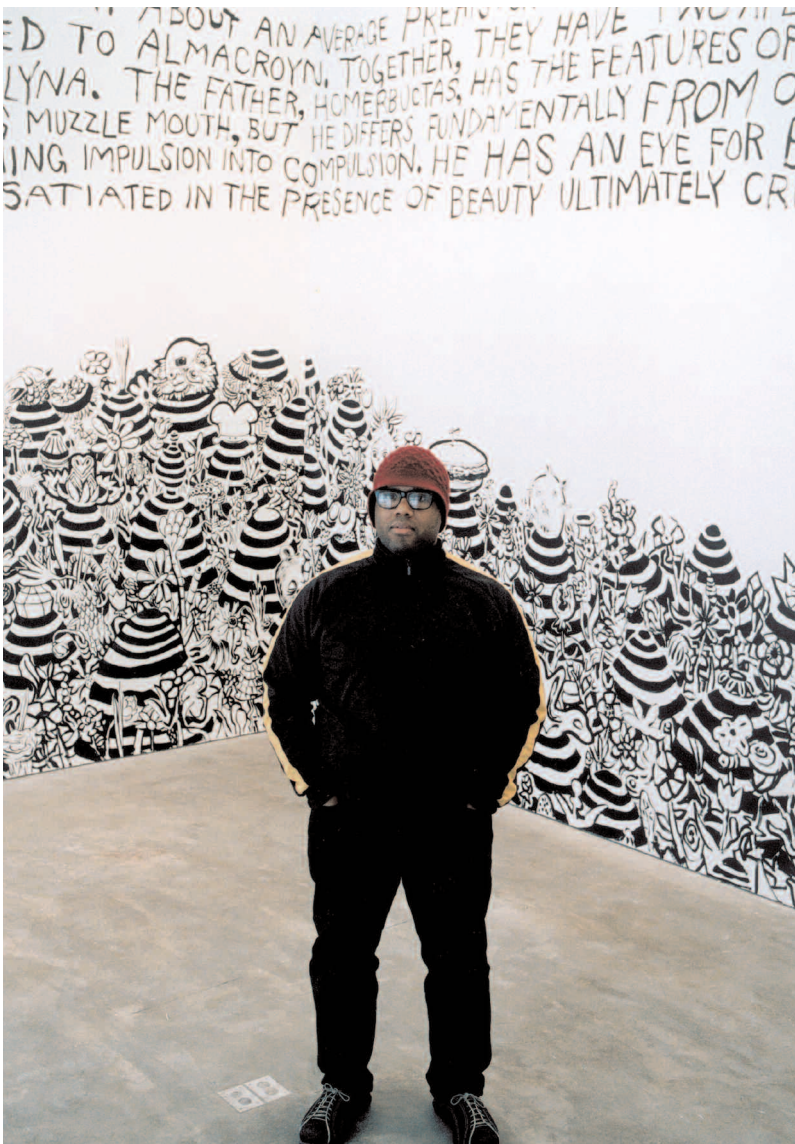
In this exhibition, we are introduced to *St Sesom*, a free-thinking vegan minister, who begins to dream in colour. In one dream, it is pointed out to *Sesom* that mounds and vegans are descended from the same father and need not be enemies. *Sesom* is commanded to help other vegans become men again by being friendly to mounds and consuming their moundmeat as meat rather than *tofu* so that the vegans might 'regain strength, stature and spectral happiness'. *Sesom* meets *Mound No. 1* ('*The Legend*', star of several previous episodes in the narrative), who agrees to





give him moundmeat. Sesom gathers disciples in 'the Blestian Room', from which safe haven of meditation and concerted concentration on the healing power of colour, they seek to convert the vegan world.

Sesom's story is told through large-scale collaged paintings, prints, drawings, a larger-than life-size sculpture of a fist carrying a bucket of Pepto-Bismol, an inner sanctum in which buckets of Pepto-Bismol rest on a bedframe inside a den made from hanging felt collages while colour-themed muzac (Yellow Submarine, Blue Moon) plays, and incantations writ large on the Gallery walls. A submersive experience, the theatrical installation banishes pre-conceived ideas about art while thrusting the viewer literally and figuratively into Hancock's mythic drama.



Hancock seeks to absorb everything - including the space in which he exhibits and the audience he exhibits it to - into his created environment, using language to drive the story and the audience's understanding of it, while also seeing words as key visual components, making his narrative dominate and control its surroundings by literally writing it on the walls. His saga is exuberant, subversive and curiously beguiling. It is presented through a variety of cultural tropes and visual styles, the artist mimicking comic-strip superhero battles and medieval mystery plays with equal panache, in a candy-coloured world which owes something to Hieronymus Bosch, something else to Max Ernst and a great deal to the teeming visual imagination of its creator.

## Publication

A major new publication will accompany the exhibition.

## Tour

The exhibition is available to tour from the end of April 2007.

### Size:

148 running metres (500 square metres).

### Costs:

7,000 Euros fee, plus a share of transport and crating costs, plus insurance and all local costs, plus purchase of an agreed number of publications at unit cost.