

Trenton Doyle Hancock/Biography

Visual Artist

Trenton Doyle Hancock was born in 1974 in Oklahoma City, OK. Raised in Paris, Texas, Hancock earned his BFA from Texas A&M University, Commerce and his MFA from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University, Philadelphia. Hancock's prints, drawings, and collaged felt paintings work together to tell the story of the Mounds—a group of mythical creatures that are the tragic protagonists of the artist's unfolding narrative. Each new work by Hancock is a contribution to the saga of the Mounds, portraying the birth, life, death, afterlife, and even dream states of these half-animal, half-plant creatures.

Influenced by the history of painting, especially Abstract Expressionism, Hancock transforms traditionally formal decisions—such as the use of color, language, and pattern—into opportunities to create new characters, develop sub-plots, and convey symbolic meaning. Hancock's paintings often rework Biblical stories that the artist learned as a child from his family and local church community. Balancing moral dilemmas with wit and a musical sense of language and color, Hancock's works create a painterly space of psychological dimension.

Trenton Doyle Hancock, the 2007 recipient of the Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize from the Studio Museum in Harlem has shown in exhibitions nationally and internationally, including the 2000 and 2002 Whitney Biennials. Solo exhibitions of his work in have been mounted at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami. He has also shown internationally at the Lyon and Istanbul Biennials. Most recently, solo exhibition *Trenton Doyle Hancock: The Wayward Thinker* was at the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh in 2007 and traveled to the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam.



Hancock is represented by James Cohan Gallery, New York and Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas.

**CULT OF COLOR:
CALL TO COLOR**

Trenton Doyle Hancock/Chronology

1974 Born Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Currently lives and works in Houston, Texas

EDUCATION

2000 M.F.A. Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1997 B.F.A. Texas A&M University, Commerce, Texas
1994 Associate of Science, Paris Junior College, Paris, Texas

AWARDS

2005 Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Biennial Award
2004 Penny McCall Foundation Award
2003 Artadia Foundation Award
Joyce Foundation Award
1999 Joan Mitchell Foundation, Grant Recipient
1997 Skowhegan Camille Hanks Cosby Fellowship for African-American Artists
Arch and Anne Giles Kimbrough Award, Dallas Museum of Art
1996 Texas Intercollegiate Press Association
Rocky Mountain Collegiate Media Association
Southwestern Journalism Congress
1995 American Scholastic Press Association
Rocky Mountain Collegiate Media Association
Southwestern Journalism Congress

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2007 *The Wayward Thinker*, The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland
The Wayward Thinker, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
2006 *In The Blestian Room*, James Cohan Gallery, New York, New York
2005 *More Mound Milking and Miracle Machines*, Dunn and Brown Contemporary Project Gallery, ARCO
International Art Fair, Madrid, Spain
St. Sesom and the Cult of Color, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas
2004 *Trenton Doyle Hancock*, Paris Junior College, Paris, Texas
2003 *Moments in Mound History*, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio
For a Floor of Flora, James Cohan Gallery, New York, New York
It Came From Studio Floor, Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami, Florida
2002 *It Came From Studio Floor*, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas
2001 *The Life and Death of #1*, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas traveling to Modern Art
Museum of Fort Worth, Texas; Texas Fine Arts Association at the Jones Center for Contemporary Art,
Austin, Texas (catalogue)
The Legend Is In Trouble, James Cohan Gallery, New York, New York

- 2000 *Wow Thats Me*, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas
 1998 *Off Colored*, Gerald Peters Gallery, Dallas, Texas
- 1997 *AUTOBIODEGRADABLE, Honors Thesis Exhibition*, University Gallery, Texas A&M University,
 Commerce, Texas

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2007 *The Sirens' Song*, Arthouse At the Jones Center, Austin, Texas, traveling.
The Lizard Cult, Clementine Gallery, New York, New York
Taking Possession, University of Arkansas, Little Rock, AR
- 2006 *The Compulsive Line: Etching 1900 to Now*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York
Black Alphabet, Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland
A Brighter Day Group Exhibition, James Cohan Gallery, New York, New York
Infinite Painting: Contemporary Paintings and Global Realism, Villa Manin Centre for Contemporary Art,
 Passariano, Italy
- 2005 *Looking at Words*, Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York, New York
Swarm, The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, PA 19107
- 2004 *5th Anniversary Exhibition*, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas
Perspectives @ 25: A Quarter-Century of New Art in Houston, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas
Drawing Under the Influence: Lee Baxter Davis & His Proteges, The Dallas Center for Contemporary Art,
 Dallas, Texas (catalogue)
Between the Lines, James Cohan Gallery, New York, New York
Political Nature, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York
Reordering Reality: Collecting Contemporary Art, Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio
- 2003 *Poetic Justice*, 8th International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey
It Happened Tomorrow, 7th Lyon Biennale of Contemporary Art, Lyon, France
Splat Boom Pow! The Influence of Comics in Contemporary Art, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas,
 traveling to Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Massachusetts; Wexner Center Galleries at The Belmont
 Building, Columbus, Ohio
On the Wall: Wallpaper and Tableau, The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Twenty-fifth Anniversary Exhibition, Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans, Louisiana
Flip, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas
Rendered, Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York, New York
- 2002 *Art on Paper*, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Weatherspoon Art Gallery,
 Greensboro, North Carolina
Western Artists: Selections from New American Paintings #42, Osp Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts
Next, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas
2002 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York
Core 2002 Exhibition, Glassell School of Art of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas
Two by Two for AIDS and Art, amfAR and Dallas Museum of Art Fundraiser, Dallas, Texas

Sugar and Cream: Large Unstratched Wall-Hangings by Contemporary Artists, Triple Candie, Harlem, New York

- 2001 *Freestyle*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, New York traveling to Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, California
Portraiture, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, University Galleries, Little Rock, Arkansas
2001 New Orleans Triennial, New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, Louisiana
Core 2001 Exhibition, Glassell School of Art of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas
Private Collections: Artists, Curators and Collectors, University of Texas at Arlington, The Gallery at UTA, Arlington, Texas
The Big Id, James Cohan Gallery, New York, New York
- 2000 *Out of the Ordinary: New Art from Texas*, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas
Balls, James Cohan Gallery, New York, New York
2000 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York
Artistic Centers in Texas: Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas Fine Arts Association at the Jones Center for Contemporary Art, Austin, Texas
Ziggy and the Black Dinosaurs and Other Folktales, Longwood Arts Gallery, Bronx, New York
- 1998 *Texas Dialogues: Parallels, Dallas/San Antonio*, Blue Star Contemporary Art Center, San Antonio, Texas
Link, Gerald Peters Gallery, Dallas, Texas
- 1997 *New Views, Eight Emerging Texas Artists*, Gerald Peters Gallery, Dallas, Texas
Link, Gerald Peters Gallery, Dallas, Texas
- 1996 *Works on Paper*, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- 1995 *Juried Student Show*, curator: Tom Moody, East Texas State University, Commerce, Texas

PERFORMANCES

- 2000 *Wow Thats Me*, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas
In My Own Spit I Found A Hero Even Worse Than Myself, Temple Gallery, Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- 1999 *Alluvial The Top Layer*, Temple Gallery, Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- 1998 *Off Colored*, Gerald Peters Gallery, Dallas, Texas
- 1997 *AUTOBIODEGRADABLE, Honors Thesis Exhibition*, University Gallery, Texas A&M University, Commerce, Texas

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 - "Meatmarket," *Modern Painters*, February.
 - "The Art Happening: Trenton Doyle Hancock," *Scotland on Sunday*, February 4.
 - Burnet, Andrew. "Explosion of Beauty and Beast," *The Herald*, February 8.
 - Mottram, Jack. "The Writing's on the Wall. Just Don't Ask What It's Saying," *The Herald*, February 9.
 - "10 Great Things to See and Do, as Chosen by our Critics," *The Guardian*, February 9.
 - Mansfield, Susan. "Son of a Preacher Man," *The Scotsman*, February 10.
 - "Trenton Doyle Hancock Edinburgh," *The Guardian*, February 10-16.
 - Leaver-Yao, Isla. "Trenton Doyle Hancock: The Wayward Thinker," *The List*, Issue 568, February 15.
 - Lesso, Rosie. "Interview," *The List*, February 15- March 1.
 - Wilson, Sue. "The Fantastic Voyage," *Metro*, February 16.
 - Gavin, Francesca. "Weak Become Heroes: Trenton Doyle Hancock," *Dazed and Confused*, Issue 47, March.
 - Griffith, Gabriella. "Trenton Doyle Hancock: The Wayward Thinker," *The Skinny*, Issue 18, March.
 - Cairns, Steven. "Trenton Doyle Hancock: The Wayward Thinker," *The List*, March 15- March 29.
- 2005
- "Recent Works on Paper in Political Nature at Whitney," *ArtDaily.com*, January 27.
 - "Trenton Doyle Hancock, Art on the Edge: 17 Contemporary American Artists", *Art in Embassies Program*
 - Kutner, Janet. "Artful Odyssey," *The Dallas Morning News*, October 13.
 - Daniel, Mike. "Trenton Doyle Hancock at Dunn and Brown," *The Dallas Morning News The Guide*, September 2
 - Simblist, Noah. "Trenton Doyle Hancock: St. Sesom and the Cult of Color," *Glasstire: Texas Visual Art Online*, October.
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- Poulson, Alex. "Inspiration can be found in Texas: Trenton Doyle Hancock," *Dazed & Confused*, December: 181.
 - "Trenton Doyle Hancock: It Came From Studio Floor," *Modern Painters*, Spring: 123-124.
 - "Trenton Doyle Hancock en el Moca," *El Nuevo Herald*, March 16.
 - Weinstein, Joel. "Trenton Doyle Hancock: MoCA," *Flash Art*, June.
 - Kutner, Janet. "Trenton Doyle Hancock," *ARTnews*, Summer.
 - Princenthal, Nancy. "Trenton Doyle Hancock: Full Immersion," *Art in America*, June.
 - Bean, Shawn. "Show and Tale," *Florida International Magazine*, April.
 - Johnson, Ken. "Trenton Doyle Hancock: For a Floor of Flora," *The New York Times*, March 28.
 - "Mythical Proportions," *Street*, March.
 - Newhall, Edith. "Planet of the Apes," *New York*, March 17.
 - Herbert, Martin. "Biennale d' Art Contemporain de Lyon," *Art Forum*, December: 139.
 - De Brugerolle, Marie. "It Happened Tomorrow: Lyon Biennale," *Flash Art*, December: 41,50.
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Viveros-Faune_, Christian. "Freestyle," *New York Press*, June 24.
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Ennis, Michael. "Northern Exposure," *Texas Monthly*, February: 130.
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 Rees, Christina. "Guts 'R' Us," *The Dallas Observer*, June 18-24: 64.
 Peppard, Alan. "A Dreamy Show," *The Dallas Morning News*, June 7: 2E.
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MOUNDS VS. VEGANS

In drawings and paintings, **TRENTON DOYLE HANCOCK** pits archetypes against each other **INTERVIEWED BY AMY CRAWFORD**

ONE OF THE YOUNGEST artists ever included in the Whitney Museum of American Art's Biennial exhibition (in both 2000 and 2002), Trenton Doyle Hancock, 33, incorporates comic-book and surreal themes into his satirical, intricately detailed drawings and paintings. In the ongoing epic story that sweeps through the Houston-based artist's vibrant works, "Mounds" (below)—the good guys—face off against evil "Vegans."

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR WORK?

Naughty. Nice. Unpredictable. I make paintings, but the format into which I put the paintings encompasses drawing, sculpture and narration. So it has a large scope.

YOU'VE BEEN COMPARED TO HIERONYMUS BOSCH, SALVADOR DALI, THE POET WILLIAM BLAKE—DO YOU COUNT THEM AMONG YOUR INFLUENCES?

I would definitely list those guys. I'm more interested in Max Ernst than Dali. [Ernst's] work seems genuinely stranger to me. I get a lot of inspiration, actually, from thrift-store paintings by people who don't know how to paint.

YOUR STEPFATHER WAS A BAPTIST MINISTER. HOW DID THAT UPBRINGING AFFECT YOUR ART?

For a long time I didn't want anything to do with that past. I wanted to forget about it. Then I realized, whoa, there's so much beauty in that language, even though it's often a lot of doom and gloom. I think I thrive off the lingering repression from that, and I think that feeds my art. Why can't we as humans do these certain things? Where does morality actually

A former editorial assistant at SMITHSONIAN, AMY CRAWFORD is a student at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism.

end, and does it have a place in art? My art asks those questions. It plays out through the narratives and the characters and the wars that ensue.

WHO ARE THE MOUNDS?

The Mounds are my stand-in for the earth. They're part plant, part animal. Mounds are very passive. They just *are*.

AND THE VEGANS?

They're the opposition to these Mound characters. Whereas Mounds get bigger and bigger, Vegans are obsessed with getting smaller and smaller. They see the Mounds as a threat to that purity, and they are always plotting to destroy Mound-kind.

ARE THE VEGANS A STAND-IN FOR PEOPLE WHO PUSH THEIR MORALITY ON OTHERS?

Exactly. Instead of using Christianity or any other institution or religion that can become dogmatic, I decided, why not take [veganism] to an absurd level.

SO YOUR WORK IS ALLEGORICAL.

I think sometimes my stories start to lean toward a moral, but in the end it's up to each viewer to choose which way to go. I don't like to point and say, "This is the right way."

YOUR CAREER HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL SO FAR, ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THAT YOU'RE STILL YOUNG. WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

That I've set goals and reached them. Having my work in a gallery, having work in a museum setting.

WAS IT ALWAYS YOUR PLAN TO BE AN ARTIST?

I was that geeky kid who sat in the back of the class and just drew pictures. I didn't ever want to be a fireman or a doctor or anything else. I just wanted to be an artist. ○



JAMES COHAN GALLERY

February 10, 2007
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Son of a preacher man

By Susan Mansfield



Hancock: 'To me it's exciting to paint war.'
Picture: Jon Savage

THE WRITING IS ON THE WALL AT Edinburgh's Fruitmarket gallery. There are also paintings, drawings and some works in three dimensions which are much harder to classify. The vibrant, madcap imagination of Trenton Doyle Hancock has possessed the gallery in a way that could hardly be more different from the quiet, considered presence of the last incumbent, Christine Borland.

This is the first show in Europe for Hancock, 32, an African American based in Houston. At 25, he became the youngest artist ever to be invited to take part in the prestigious Whitney Biennial in New York, and became well known in the US when he featured in a PBS television series called Art in the 21st Century. His distinctive style emerged nearly ten years ago, a personal epic mythology which owes something to comic books, toy designs and the cinema, and something to Christianity (he is the son of a Baptist minister). In his work, stories evolve into complete environments, tied together by a written narrative which loops and leaps around the paintings.

The Hancock world - which has been compared to that of Hieronymous Bosch and William Blake - revolves around the

Mounds, peaceful black-and-white furry creatures anchored to the earth and oozing pink mound-meat; and their enemies the Vegans, skinny humanoid goblins who persecute the Mounds and turn mound-meat into tofu. Both spring from the same prehistoric progenitor, Homerbuctas, but are locked in a cosmic struggle. The allegory has been variously interpreted as intellect against intuition, nature against nurture, the human race against the planet, black against white.

"I think at first I fooled myself into thinking that it was about race," says Hancock. "There was a bit of exoticism happening, because I was black in a predominantly white art world. People saw that first, that was the thing that was always mentioned in the press. I would take racial stereotypes and treat them like a cartoonist, make fun of them, make them my own. But the conversation about race is so confined, I decided to leave these things by the wayside and focus on storytelling. The icons I use now are more universal. The Mounds represent to me a kind of stability, being at peace, growing, acceptance. The Vegans are the complete opposite. They are about pushing out everything that's good from themselves because they don't trust it. In essence they get smaller and smaller as beings, become this pale imitation of humanity, like skeletons."

Clearly, militant vegetarians are one of the targets. "The ideology of veganism preaches humanity, but some of the vegans I've encountered take it to such an extreme that it becomes preachy, dogmatic, hard to hear. I think I wanted to take this and make it the most absurd thing it could possibly be, little monsters running around eating tofu."

Hancock says he's "not the most politically minded of artists", preferring to observe trends which have recurred throughout history: clashes of ideology, failures of government, "wayward thinkers" seeking to make changes. "I invent these armies of characters who try to live together, but there is going to be some kind of rift. To me it's exciting to paint war."



JAMES COHAN GALLERY

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Hancock grew up a son of the church in Paris, Texas, and says Christian mythology, the conflict between good and evil, plays a key part in the world he has created. "There are a lot of ministers in my family and the women are even more intense about spirituality than the men. I hung out with my aunts and my mother, they were a big influence on me. Often I don't have a biblical story in mind and then I realise I've just re-written the story of Noah or something." The work at the Fruitmarket was created over two years, and tells of St Sesom ("Moses" backwards), a Vegan drawn to make friends with the Mounds, to lead his people to a kind of redemption.

Hancock has sketched and doodled constantly all his life. At college, faced with the potential difficulty of making a living as an artist, he studied cartooning and illustration. "Little did I know I was taking roads which would eventually cross and become this hybrid thing. I started to look for a way to combine cartooning with painting, performing and these other things in an art discipline."

He says he is increasingly drawn to watching stand-up comedy, and considers his role in the art world as something of a court jester. "If you can get people laughing, there's something cleansing about that. The best comedy is the most intelligent criticism you can have."



The Artists



[photo by George Brainard]

Graham Reynolds/Composer

Stephen Mills/Choreographer

Trenton Doyle Hancock/Artist

**CULT OF COLOR:
CALL TO COLOR**