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by LA Canvas about an hour ago

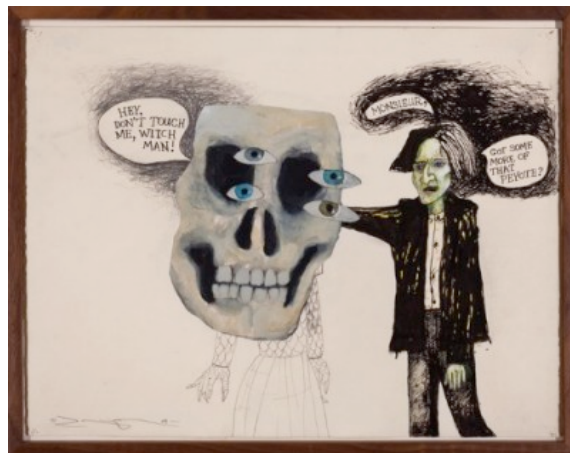
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Art

TERRY ALLEN: GHOST SHIP RODEZ: THE MOMO CHRONICLES AT LA LOUVER

SHANA NYS DAMBROT

10 MARCH – 16 APRIL 2011



Terry Allen: GHOST SHIP RODEZ: The Momo Chronicles

Opening reception: Thursday, 10 March, 6-8 p.m.

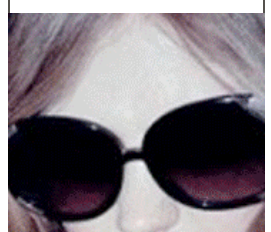
In 1937, the unstable and opiated artistic genius, poet, performer, and theorist Antonin Artaud was unceremoniously transported in the hold of a ship from Dublin back to France following a violent altercation with local authorities involving hallucinations and a walking stick once belonging to Jesus. About 30 years later, a young Chouinard student found himself up in San Francisco at City Lights, mesmerized by a book of mostly self-portraits by Artaud in photos and drawings. And about 40 years after that day

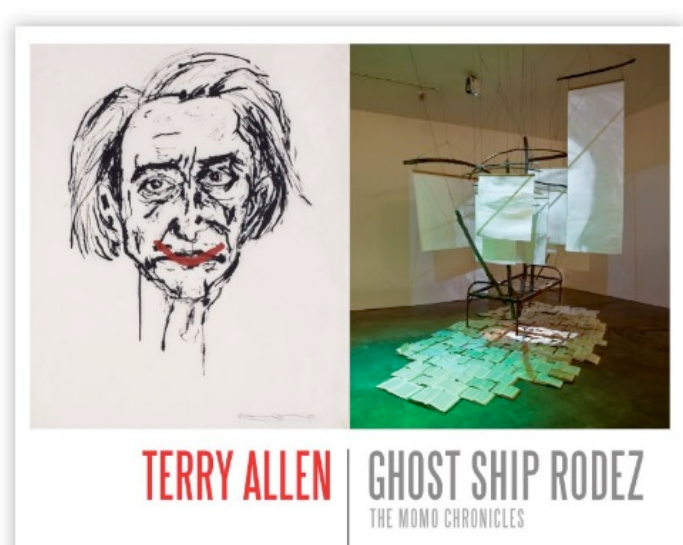
when Lawrence Ferlinghetti gave him the book as a grudging tribute to what must have been a wild light he recognized in the eyes of the young student, Terry Allen has finally made his piece about, and maybe even his peace with, Antonin Artaud.

Artaud was a poet and artist and also worked as an actor, appearing in numerous film-school staples, which income was used to underwrite his radically difficult avant-garde theatrical concepts. (He's the father of the influential Theatre of Cruelty philosophy.) Like Artaud, Allen operates in an array of media and styles, including but not limited to music, theatre, sculpture, painting, drawing, video, and complex installations featuring the foregoing as needed. Artaud's life was a ready-made Terry Allen piece -- all fractured beauty, simultaneity, decisive events, and fever-dreams -- crying out for the kind of long-term, multidimensional narrative arc and immersive character inhabitation Allen favors. And then there were the real-life parallels: both men had occasion to visit Mexico -- though by all accounts Artaud took way more peyote and codeine than Allen ever did. Following a soberer version of Artaud's trail, Allen discovered a small "Artaud Museum" in the middle of the Mexican outback, and knew without a doubt he was onto something. It seems Artaud's 1936 Mexican adventure had triggered a massive psychological episode that culminated in the Irish incident in 1937 and the straight-jacket. Allen couldn't help but wonder what might have been going through what was left of Artaud's mind in those nightmarish 17 days at sea.

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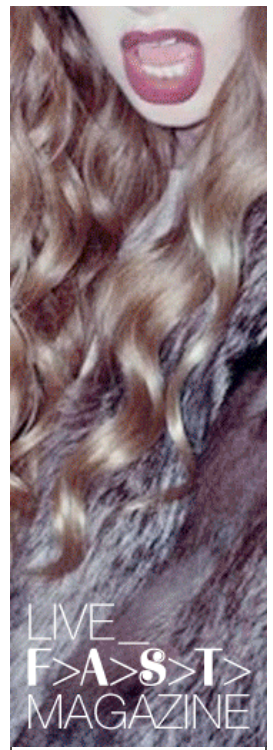
LA'S UPCOMING EVENTS



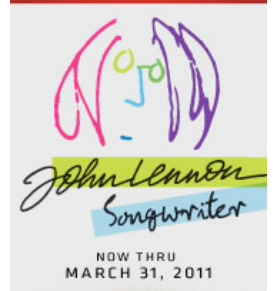


Allen brings all his best devices and every medium at his command to Ghost Ship Rodez; and each element from large-scale video-based sculptural installations to framed works on paper tells the story in the way best suited to itself, all working toward a composite whole -- literally and figuratively. Large multimedia works evoke the ship hold and the cot to which Artaud was chained -- including sail-like screens for projected excerpts of films in which Artaud performed, and a rippling ocean tide of fluttering pages from a sea of open books -- or else the absurdly broke-apart body of the poet and his fragmented psyche, using a puppet made of HD screens that each play a segment of the related "Daughter of the Heart" monologues. In the absence of a proper LA venue, that performative element has become a self-contained Radio Play -- a CD which in itself is a darkly mesmerizing, at times visceral, sparsely produced yet warmly textured volume of Allen's narration and singing of original songs, alternating with Jo Harvey Allen's unmistakable portrayals of Artaud's fantastic dark angels.

In light of this expansive media sensorium, it's almost understandable why no one seems to focus on the paintings and drawings -- the pulsating, heartbreaking, and haunting mixed media works that are the soul of the operation. They are called "chronicles" in this series, and as such represent what might have been a madman's diary; pages torn from an overlarge travelogue of the mind. Depictions of body parts, journal entries in blindly copied French scrawl, neatly typeset snippets of ranting poems, maps of continents, birds, birds, birds, and endless self-portraits (which is of course to say, portraits of Artaud) are all executed in an impressive array of visual styles from the academic to the expressionistic, the refined to the frantic; and using an art-store shopping-list of media featuring gouache, pastel, color pencil, graphite, press type, and collage elements. (That means stuffed rats mauling the outside of some frames -- you know, for atmosphere.) And because Allen has a kind of a dark sense of humor.



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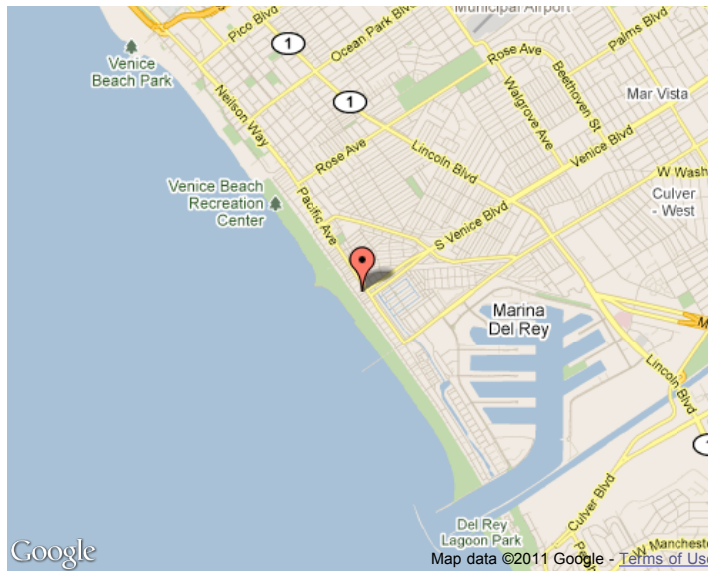
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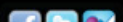
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Brilliant introduction to Terry Allen's show, and work in general; can't wait to see the show at Louver, and then track down the Artaud Museum in Mexico!

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