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Desire Obtain Cherish's "#undertheinfluence" Channels L.A.'s Dissolute Soul



Courtesy KM Fine Arts

Desire Obtain Cherish, "Designer Drugs SET 2012: LV,Hermes,Chanel,YSL"

by Benjamin Genocchio

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"Path to Riches" / Courtesy KM Fine Arts

There is more than a touch of irony to “undertheinfluence,” the latest show at [KM Fine Arts](#) in Los Angeles — 10 percent of sales from the exhibition by the artist known as Desire Obtain Cherish will go to Friendly House, a Los Angeles charity founded in 1951 to assist women recovering from alcoholism and drug addiction. Russell Brand, Hal Sparks, and William Shatner are among the charity’s celebrity supporters.

Noble and well-intentioned as the cause may be, I was curious to see how much this artist and his artwork has struck a chord with Los Angeles viewers and collectors: editors from many local publications came by, while pieces sold on opening night, including “Blood Sugar High,” a life-size nude female mannequin wrapped up in transparent plastic like a bon-bon. This piece is about sexual addiction and prostitution.

The more time you spend in Los Angeles the more you realize many people here are recovering from one kind of addiction or another. At the exhibition dinner, very few diners were drinking, except me and the gallery owner (from Chicago), while several native Angelinos puffed electronic cigarettes — recovering smokers. When I asked a “smoker” what his vices were, he smiled: I get involved with the wrong women.

What all of this suggests to me is how relevant this work is. No surprise the artist is devilishly clever: Desire Obtain Cherish, aka Jonathan Paul, born in 1975 in Salinas, is a former street artist turned Pop sculptor. Formally, his works remind you of a lot of other artists working in this vein: a mish-mash of Koons, Oldenburg, Lichtenstein, Warhol, and others. Nonetheless they grab the eye and draw you in.

Partly I think this is because, visually, the works are so pleasing. They are colorful, fun, and impeccably produced. This is the work of a real craftsman. His subject is desire, or, better, obsession, and our inability to control ourselves when it comes to certain things, be it pills, sex, shopping, chocolate, alcohol, or even ice cream. Happiness and fulfillment is the goal, the promise. What starts as a dream ends in dependency.

It is tempting to see the artist as making fun of human frailty. But I don't think so: I spent some time with him and discovered a compassionate person. He is not cynical, even if his works are satirical. He is not malicious, even if his works cut to the bone. He is more like our social conscience, delivering up uncomfortable and unpleasant truths wrapped in the most beautiful and seductive of packages.

“#undertheinfluence,” *K M Fine Arts, 814 North La Cienega, Los Angeles, though May 11.*

by Benjamin Genocchio, [Reviews, Reviews](#)

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