



PRESS RELEASE

Saturday, September 19 – October 10, 2015

## **SCOOTER LA FORGE** *How to Create a Monsterpiece*



*We all have a core of innocence, battered and buried. I don't mean immunity to guilt and shame, but the capacity to be endlessly surprised by the specificity of everything . . .*

—Peter Schjeldahl, *Brooklyn Rail*, 2015

East Village, New York—How! Happening is pleased to present ***How to Create a Monsterpiece***, an exhibition of new work by Scooter La Forge. Shocking and playful and messy and scary, his paintings and three-dimensional objects are madly over the top: anarchic yet composed, pretty yet provocative, they embody the recreational pleasure, artistic discernment, and enjoyment of PLAY. The exhibition opens Saturday, September 19 from 6–8 PM and runs through October 10, 2015 at How! Happening, 6 East 1st Street (between 2<sup>nd</sup> and Bowery). Free live streaming @ [howlarts.org](http://howlarts.org).

After leaving the small town in New Mexico where he grew up, he received a painting degree at the University of Arizona, and then moved to San Francisco where he polished his painting technique. He moved to New York when he won a fellowship to Cooper Union and it was here that he rediscovered his voice in the pop culture

and cartoon worlds of his childhood. “Twenty years later,” he says, “I am doing what I was doing when I was nine or ten years old.”

With this exhibition, La Forge comes full circle as a mature artist. His innocence and capacity to be endlessly surprised are apparent in works that break down the barriers of sculpture and painting. Described by the Saatchi Collection as “Golden books on acid,” La Forge cites Robert Rauschenberg’s *Combines* and Claes Oldenberg’s sculpture as major influences on this body of work. They incorporate presents strangers send from around the world, together with a mash up of urban detritus he finds interesting on the streets of New York City. Everything is fodder for his playfulness and innovation. Combining painting with a mind boggling array of non-traditional materials and chance objects like old brooms, dolls heads, pins, fabric, repurposed clothing, teddy bears and other stuffed animals, bags of junk jewelry—even a badminton net he found on the street, La Forge repurposes these humble gifts.

Rauschenberg says of his intention in the *Combines*: *I wanted to use the surprise and the collectiveness and the generosity of finding surprises. And if it wasn't a surprise at first, by the time I got through with it, it was.*

With a nod to Pop Art, an Expressionist painterly eye, and the exuberance of Pattern and Decoration, his work is peppered with iconic cartoon characters, both well known and from his wildly fertile imagination: “My heroes are Popeye, SpongeBob SquarePants, witches and monsters, cats, bunnies, bears, owls, and birds,” he says.

Also on view are new large paintings—psychological landscapes that are less about how they look than about how they make the viewer feel. Painted with reckless abandon, they combine the influences at play in his life and art—play that produces beauty.

“Scooter La Forge is acutely aware of his antecedents: Joyce Pensato, George Condo, Phillip Guston, Fellini’s *Clowns*, Ringling Bros’ Emmet Kelly, Picasso, and German Expressionism,” says Happening gallery director Ted Riederer in his essay, “and while this true, Scooter is completely of this era, a time of gentrification, art fairs, and the economic paradox where a high-end boutique stands next to a welfare hotel on a street notorious the world over as Skid Row.”

*The arts are a great little laboratory of absolutely free play of ideas and emotions which normal social space can't cope with: you can play war and nobody dies, and play love and nobody has their heart broken.*

—Peter Schjeldahl

## About Scooter La Forge

Scooter LaForge is a full-time artist living in New York City. This year, he will be participating in shows at the Leslie Lohman Museum in New York, Friedrichshof Museum in Vienna, and Spiritmuseum and Absolut Art Collection in Sweden, as well as presenting a solo show at the How! Happening Gallery in New York. LaForge has recently collaborated with Belgian designer Walter Van Bierendonck and Norwegian artist Bjarne Melgaard, and was chosen to be a keynote speaker at the Montreal Fashion & Design Festival.

He was commissioned to create garments for Madonna’s performance on The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon as well as the *Bitch I’m Madonna* video off the Rebel Heart album. Beyoncé, Miley Cyrus, Rihanna and Debbie Harry have all worn items from his wildly successful clothing line. For Blondie’s upcoming tour, LaForge was commissioned to design their concert t-shirt. He is a recent recipient of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Award.

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