

lora reynolds gallery

Austin American Statesman

July 14, 2005

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Lora Reynolds enlivens the Austin art scene with international flavor



Oh yeah. Live Music Capital of the World. A trendy destination for indie film folks and techie geeks.

Lora Reynolds was only too aware of Austin's reputation before she opened her gallery in March, smack in the middle of the South by Southwest music, film and interactive media madness.

But that didn't discourage her. The 32-year-old Houston native and University of Texas graduate with big sparkling brown eyes figured it was time to jump on the ever-lengthening bandwagon that is Austin's burgeoning contemporary art scene.

And why not? A number of professional galleries successfully weathered the economic storm of the past few years. A crop of hip new artist-run spaces sprang up to critical acclaim. And institutions such Arthouse and the Austin Museum of Art continue to build their cred as larger-scale harbingers of trends.

Besides -- after seven years of working in the white-hot London and New York gallery worlds, Reynolds rightly realized something: "Why not use my connections to add something to Austin?" she says. "Why not bring art here that otherwise wouldn't be shown?"

Art like the obsessively created drawings by Britisher Ewan Gibbs, who spends weeks

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building each drawing, putting one mark in each tiny square of graph paper. Collectors pile on a waiting list to purchase one of Gibbs' drawings, of which he only produces ten or so a year. Reynolds sold each one of the eight she displayed in May and June. And that was only the second exhibit she hosted in her subdued and intimate space on West Avenue.

Reynolds' path to gallery ownership isn't typical.

After majoring in psychology, she moved to Houston to pursue a master's degree in clinical therapy. But when it came to seeing troubled patients as part of her practicum, she experienced a rude self-awakening: "I wasn't really enjoying it," she says.

Good thing her budding interest in contemporary art was growing ever bigger. Thanks to her now-mother-in-law, art collector Jeanne Klein, Reynolds increasingly delved into Houston's art scene. And so when Reynolds dropped her academic pursuits, Klein suggested a brief internship with prestigious London gallery owner Anthony D'Offay.

Reynolds packed her bags. But after she arrived in London, two months turned into a year. And then that turned into a six-year stint in New York where Reynolds represented the gallery's artists to collectors there.

But her ties to the Lone Star State -- especially a deepening relationship with her now-husband, financier Quincy Lee -- brought her back to Austin a few years ago. "I guess knew all along I'd be headed back to Texas," she says with a laugh.

Marriage and then motherhood (daughter Georgia is almost two) didn't sway Reynolds from her resolve to open a gallery.

She found her West Avenue storefront space last fall; in March she opened with an exhibit of unpublished prints from the Andy Warhol Foundation. Then it was the successful Gibbs show. Currently, she's featuring the beguiling portraits of New York-based artist Jim Torok.

Savvy art observers say Reynolds' venture is a welcome addition to Austin. "I think her direction is completely original, totally accessible and takes brilliant advantage of her international art world connections," says Annette DiMeo Carlozzi, curator of contemporary art at UT's Blanton Museum of Art. "I'm thrilled she's part of the local mix."

Carlozzi isn't the only one thrilled that Reynolds has joined the local art mob. After living in Houston for decades, Jeanne Klein and her husband, Michael, moved to Austin last year. Longtime supporters of the Blanton, the Kleins purchased two Gibbs drawings from their daughter-in-law for the Blanton. And then Arthouse tapped Reynolds for its board of trustees, while the Austin Museum of Art recruited her to head up this year's Art Ball.

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This fall, Reynolds is collaborating on events with Cinematexas and Glasstire, an online visual arts journal. Collaboration, she says, is the key to getting more people interested in contemporary art: "What I really want is for people to just come into the gallery and enjoy themselves and the art and learn something about it." This fall, Reynolds is collaborating on events with Cinematexas and Glasstire, an online visual arts journal. Collaboration, she says, is the key to getting more people interested in contemporary art: "What I really want is for people to just come into the gallery and enjoy themselves and the art and learn something about it."