

VISUAL ART eNEWSLETTER

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Tristan Eaton, "All at Once"
by Liz Goldner



Tristan Eaton, "Studies in Bronze and Marble," 2021, silk-screen and cycle combo on paper, 36 x 24" each

Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, California
Continuing through October 31, 2021

For its inaugural show since the Covid-19 lockdown, this museum is devoting its entire exhibition space to the work of Tristan Eaton. The multi-talented, multifarious artist works in a variety of genres including street art, murals, easel painting, sculpture and photography, as well as designs for Marvel toys and other well-known brands. The extensive volume and variety of 25 years of work by the

43-year-old artist reveals his intense and non-stop investigation into and execution of artmaking.



Tristan Eaton, reproductions of selected murals

The museum façade draws us in with images displayed of his vibrantly colored murals. Within the galleries, the show begins with a selection of his early pieces, many inspired by his love of comic books. These drawings, album covers, band flyers and hip-hop posters portend the styles and themes of his public art, begun in the 2000s.

Best known as a muralist, Eaton has created politically oriented street art in Los Angeles, New York City, Miami, Honolulu, Paris, Berlin, Shanghai and other international locations. These murals — all of them spray painted — express his intention to inspire and transform our communities toward more honesty and integrity. One room in the show includes selections from 20 of these murals, with a few featuring characters from “Frankenstein” films.

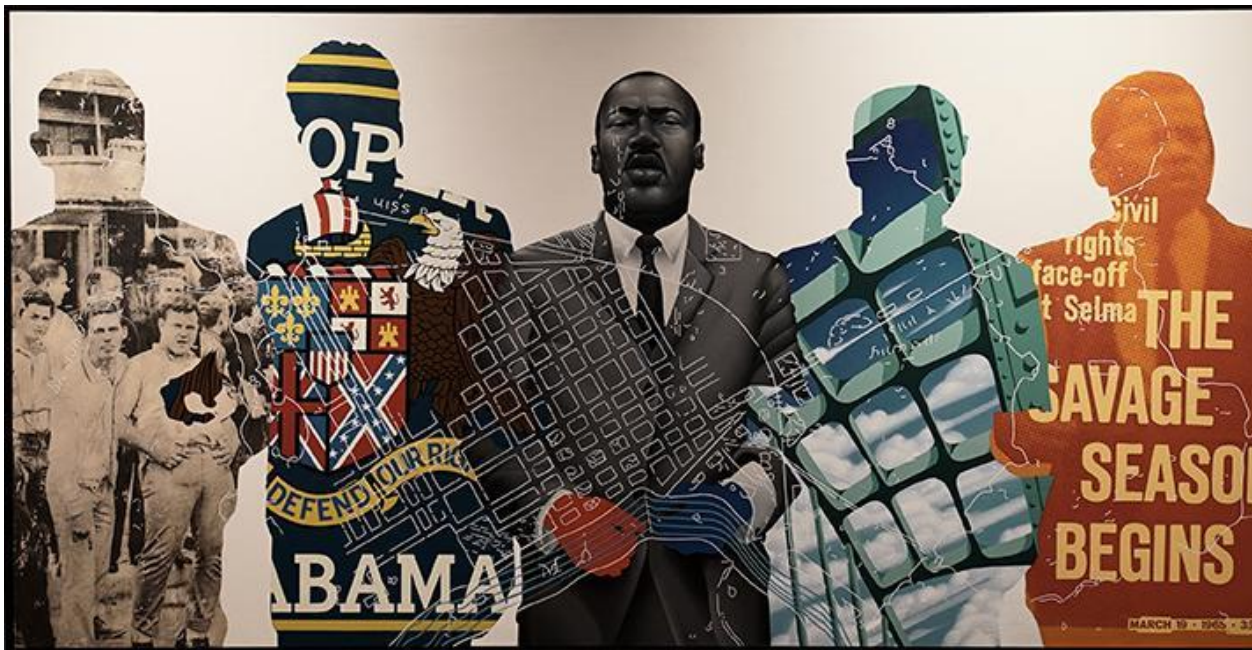


Tristan Eaton, "Unfair Fun Fair," 2021, installation of interactive murals

A room size installation, "The Unfair Fun Fair" (2021), also called "American Dream," features 88 feet of interactive murals, beginning with the words, "Play or Get Played," and "The rules are made to be broken." Embedded within these murals are several old-fashioned looking carnival style games that viewers can play, while exploring the social inequities in our culture. Games include "Throw Money at Your Problems," "911 Roulette" (in which the player never wins), "Stir the Melting Pot," "Your Future is a Puzzle" and "Marry a Citizen," featuring a succession of people of different races.

In another gallery, the mural "The Selma March" features Martin Luther King Jr., surrounded by four multi-colored individuals. One person wears the words, "The Civil Rights face-off at Selma: The Savage Season Begins." Another has "Obama" emblazoned on his clothing. As a fine artist, Eaton offers three large paintings in his "Studies in Bronze and Studies in Marble" (2021) series. The faces, created with spray paint and other media, are so deftly crafted that from a distance they appear as sculptural works.

Eaton's "TrustoCorp New York Map" (2008-2013) is an interactive map of lower Manhattan, including giant push pins that indicate locations where the artist placed 72 outrageous street signs. The signs, as indicated by the pattern of the push pins, were placed around Manhattan in the outline of a middle finger. TrustoCorp is the name of Eaton's street art collective, included anonymous volunteers who have taken part in his underground public art hoaxing. Among the collective's activities was the creation of the 72 signs, highlighting the hypocrisy of human behavior through sarcasm and satire. These signs, installed to the right of the map, include the slogans: "Vandalism Encouraged," "Guns Don't Make Laws, People Do," "Fame Limit, 15 Minutes," "Cash Ruins Everything Around Me," "The Devil Made Me Do It" and "Ponzi Zone, Spend Freely." Most include illustrative images.



Tristan Eaton, "The Selma March," spray paint, Xerox transfer and silk-screen on canvas, 96 x 48"

Throughout this exhibition, Eaton's iconic "Dunny and Munny Figures" are placed on shelves and pedestals. These sculptural pieces/toys, dating from 2002, appear in various sizes and finishes that vaguely resemble Jeff Koons' sculptures. They represent Eaton's goal to create art that is approachable for the masses by merging a fine art aesthetic with consumer products. The originals of these pieces (they are fabricated reproductions here) are in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art and the Smithsonian Institution.

Also included in this remarkable display are Eaton's "Uprise" sculpture of a raised fist; his mural created in response to the Black Lives Matter movement last year; his copper printing plates for and execution of his Marvel fine art prints; his artwork that went into space with SpaceX, displayed in a room mimicking the abyss of

space; his elaborate 2020 NFL Super Bowl tickets; and his 3-D room with psychedelic overtones and huge illustrations of renowned figures (3-D glasses provided at the front desk).

One cannot aesthetically pigeonhole Eaton's 25-year oeuvre, as it is so expansive and varied, nor can we readily describe the motivation of the artist. Perhaps he is a savant or polymath or an obsessive artist who uses his drive and talent to strive to heal our planet. Or as Carlo McCormick, a pop culture critic and curator wrote, his approach is "the shape of a kind of creative schizophrenia, an amalgam of incompatibilities, a hybrid of impossible oddity." When you visit "All at Once," prepare to spend a good part of the day there and to be spellbound.



TrustoCorp, "Guerrilla street art collective signs," 2008-13