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Culture and the Curious in Dallas, Texas

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Strange Beast

Art Review

Houstonian Howard Sherman's bright, chaotic work in a show called *Bloodthirsty Animal on Two Legs* at Pan American Art Projects is, like the weather outside, ravaging.

By [Lucia Simek](#)



HOWARD SHERMAN: *A Strange Political Beast*, 2009. Acrylic and marker, 60.0"h x 50.0"w

Walking into a gallery is always a little transportive: white walls, high ceilings, and the exacting order of an art space never fail to snap me out of whatever mood I find myself in and suggest I feel otherwise, for better or worse. This past weekend's endless rain had me tramping through ankle-deep puddles with resignation, everyone shaking off like wet dogs at the doors of galleries all over town, new puddles forming in vestibules just inside. And while I imagine that the art in many of these spaces had some effect at curbing the weather's irritations, I found its perfect alter ego at Pan American Art Projects in the bright, chaotic work of Houstonian Howard Sherman in a show called *Bloodthirsty Animal on Two Legs*. Like the weather outside, Sherman's work here is a ravaging.

Taking cues from abstract expressionism, color-field painting, neo-expressionism and, most notably, graffiti, Sherman's large paintings are a ferocious hodge podge of derivations that, because of their intense energy, seem entirely fresh. It's the sort of layered, devil-ne'er-care painting that's testament to an artistic primal urge that can't lay latent, and because of it, Sherman's canvases feel like contained explosions.

Before getting his MFA, Sherman drew a comic strip for a number of years and cartoonish body parts actively appear in the paintings here: bulbous noses, maniacal laughing mouths, and ample examples of simplified genitalia. Obscured by layers of thick and thrashing paint, these body parts lace the work with a



perversed and bawdy joviality, steering the paintings away from any purely formal reading. Instead, they have a highly sexed, eruptive tone, the frenzied burst of color on the canvas seeming as much about physical experience as they are about the emotive power of paint itself. In *Confessions of a Ukrainian Whore Monger* a sketched foot and bent knee thrust up from a teeming mass of paint, as do radiating bars of vertical color — cool blues and white, and a dashed black line. These register like a scream, the hazy phallus (or fist?) nearby increasing the illicit tension of what's being suggested here. But this piece, and others with the same undercurrent of violence, is masked by candy-colored palette of pinks, whites, yellows, and aqua that balances the humorous with the deadly serious.



HOWARD SHERMAN: *Bloodthirsty animal on two legs*, 2009. Acrylic, marker, & spray paint on canvas; 70.0" h x 60.0" w

Much of Sherman's work here is political, though it's certainly riddled with the same chaotic, visceral energy as the others. *Republican Bowtie*, *A Strange Political Beast*, and *Cultural Agitator* are colorful cacophonies, less sexually charged than just straight up angry, about what it's not clear. But a certain kind of anger and violence seem to find a most apt articulation in the subculture, pop culture, hip culture, anti-culture anthem that is graffiti, and Howard Sherman's themes are no exception. But Sherman's rich painting, thick with colorful layers, transcends even graffiti's angsty powers, becoming a different sort of beast altogether, one that's energetically jocular while it rages.

Howard Sherman: *Bloodthirsty Animal on Two Legs*

[Pan American Art Projects](#)

1615 Dragon Street

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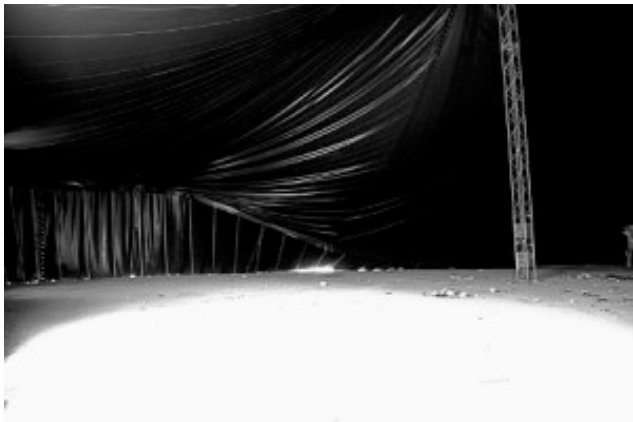
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Strange Beast

By [Lucia Simek](#)

Art Review

Houstonian Howard Sherman's bright, chaotic work in a show called *Bloodthirsty Animal on Two Legs* at Pan American Art Projects is, like the weather outside, ravaging.

[Play on Memory](#)

By [Joan Arbery](#)

Theater Review

Dwelling on memory, loss, and redemption, Noah Haidle's *Vigils* is a fitting way to mark 9/11 and the coming of autumn. But where Kitchen Dog Theater's production succeeds in its introspection, the play itself feels tedious in its repetitions.

[For the Love of Sport](#)

By [Peter Simek](#)

Film Review

Paul from Staten Island, a nobody with a passion for the Giants, shows big character in Robert Siegel's *Big Fan*.

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Digital Divide

New media artist Paul Slocum's work plays with distinctions between genres, his work drawing on his background in video art, music composition, and computer programming. Below, Slocum demonstrates a sampling program he wrote that takes entire songs – such as a piece of Evangelical Christian pop – and transforms it into dance music. In the second part, Slocum demonstrates his application of frequency modulation synthesis in some of latest musical ideas. Click [here](#) to read the feature on Paul Slocum.

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Part 2

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CULTURE CHATTER

[Dallas Byrne-d](#)

[Wick Allison points](#) to this [Wall Street Journal piece](#) by former-Talking Heads turned musical guro David Byrne on his dreams for perfect city living. In short, it is everything Dallas is not (or seems not to be). Our city is highlighted, in fact, as Byrne's nightmare. Hadn't realized Byrne was such an [urban-head](#). [Not surprising](#).

[Peter Simek](#) | September 14th 10:25 am | [1 Comment](#)

[Random Friday Playlist](#)

Cheb Mami – Douha Aliya

Wilco – Ashes of American Flags

The Clancy Brothers – Carrickfergus

Tom Waits - Hold On

Bruce Springsteen – My City of Ruins

[Peter Simek](#) | September 11th 11:20 am | [No Comments](#)

[Buyers Market](#)

[From Modern Art Notes](#): a good number of museums are putting some of their collections on the market this fall. Those of you with deep pockets (or an institution to steer) take note.

[Peter Simek](#) | September 11th 9:44 am | [No Comments](#)

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