

ARTILLERY



MAX HOOPER SCHNEIDER

by Annabel Osberg ·

Cleverly titled “Tryouts for the Human Race,” **Max Hooper Schneider**’s show features only four works, each of which exists as a wondrous self-contained realm inside **Jenny’s**, a diminutive Silver Lake gallery whose absence of outward signage makes the sight inside all the more surprising. On either side of the gallery is a specially lit aquarium harboring live creatures surrounded by human discards. As if their glass tank weren’t confining enough, the fish in *Genesis* (all works 2018) are sequestered by obtrusive aquarium decor of garish plastic and metal oddments agglomerated into hulking mounds rising above the water line. Cramped as live sardines in a can, crowded little schools of freshwater ichthyofauna dart nervously to and fro within their man-made ecosystem, not knowing where to turn within the dire straits of their bewilderingly artificial reef. Across the room, *Lady Marlene* showcases anemones, starfish and other marine species enveloped in whitish underwater masses of lingerie that overstretch the water’s surface and languidly sway as factitious seaweed in the aqueous current. Each aquarium’s dual humps of sculpted junk vaguely resemble looming heads or bodies, symbolically embodying the human factors behind extant oceanic islands of floating trash. Both artworks fancifully evoke animals trapped within cataclysmal tide pools in some peopleless apocalyptic world. Aquaria reappear in miniature inside *Mommy and Me* (facade pictured above), a charred dollhouse ruled by sadistic fiends. See if you can spot the decapitation scene among this macabre microcosm’s many elaborately detailed vignettes. Completing the show’s anthropogenic theme, *Utopia* features a model train endlessly circling a fleshly landscape predominated by pathological phallic protuberances.

December 12, 2018