

Max Hooper Schneider at Jenny's

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Text by Keith J. Varadi



A peachy Pepto-Bismol hue has been applied to the walls, even the air conditioning unit, of Jenny's. Nothing hangs on the antacid-washed walls, though four sculptures sit atop metallic structures on a carpeted floor in Max Hooper Schneider's second exhibition with the gallery, titled *Tryouts For The Human Race*. Given the general populace's indifference to the contemporary art world, the cheeky title serves more as a humble jab at niche-level propensities for self-absorption, self-importance, and self-sabotage.

The gallery—located in an old one-room office space in the hashtag-laden Silver Lake neighborhood now notorious for its overpriced beverages and maxed-out real estate—overlooks a neglected empty lot that has developed into a debris pit in stasis. Within the modest interior, the artist piles his own debris into slick fish tanks resting on steel bases beneath LED panels. In one (*Genesis*, all works 2018), tiny fishes navigate among each other, around two mounds of arcade junk that has excessively accumulated, reaching beyond the tank's brim. In the other (*Lady Marlene*), lingerie and additional risqué items dig into sand, forming dual mounds similar to those across the room, lingering about with various sea creatures. Content that could elsewhere be deemed puerile here feels tasteful due to the organization of objects and overall ornamentation. Each tank is like a complicated bizarre version of the other one, both vacillating between sexiness and silliness. The other two works in the show are tabled narrative mini-worlds: *Utopia* features a *Groundhog Day* scenario of a train passing through a resin landscape of semi-flaccid flesh over and over again; *Mommy & Me* is a fraught fairy tale set in a burned-out mansion, surrounded by desert flora, drenched in blood, and trashed by heshers, hoarders, and ghouls.

Through each work, Hooper Schneider's ambition reveals itself; however, with all of the thought and money that has undoubtedly gone into this presentation, he also seems to be taking the piss out of capitalist societies, including the insular ecosystem that is the art world. The endless production and consumption of shit we don't need and the resulting clutter, the monotonous daily activities and exercises, the often-feigned interest in subculture(s), and the cyclical construction and destruction of environments are all symptoms of excess in economics, anecdotally arranged in this instance with finesse and feng shui. Typically, artists who offer some sort of market-critique make work that is more of a stretch to sell, but this artist suggests that one can savvily participate in the consumer-driven system we are forced into, without being fully complicit. This position could be perceived as one wanting to have it both ways, but M.H.S. urges us to simply embrace the proposed beauty of staged anarchy.