

GENE'S

LeRoy Stevens

Eat the Garnish

April 12th to May 18th, 2025

Back in 2009 or 2010, when I was a graduate student at Virginia Commonwealth University, one of my best friends told me about this guy named LeRoy Stevens and this project he had recently completed, *Favorite Recorded Scream*. For the project, he visited every record store in Manhattan and asked employees for their favorite scream from recorded music; he then compiled the selections – ranging from Black Flag to Björk, from Led Zeppelin to Linkin Park, and from Slayer to Suicide – in the order they were submitted and somehow morphed it into a musique concrète masterpiece. I was completely blown away; it was such an ambitious project without at all being selfish, and it's like, when does that ever happen?

LeRoy has made a habit of working on these sorts of quirky, elaborate projects over the years, including: giving free, improvised tours around his hometown of Chicago in his Jeep Cherokee; an underground sculpture composed of 75 twenty-foot pieces of rebar buried beneath the ground in the Mojave Desert, which could be experienced through the use of a variable-pitch metal detector; or wearing a device for two years that he used to privately count murders he experienced through film, television, print, or the spoken word. Collectively, they trace the outline of an artist who functions on the periphery of typical art-world concerns – ultra-hip scenes, stacked CVs, bull and bear markets, traditional media, trendy blogs, etc. But with each individual project, you are more comprehensively able to access the mind of one of the most curious, earnest, humorous, and wondrous artists working today. His work often couples an overwhelmingly intuitive feel and experimental impulse with an extreme attention to detail, which is rather rare for someone who so genuinely appreciates fun and exudes so much positive energy.

He's additionally been operating the deeply daring and invariably inspiring record label, Small World, ever since he first used the imprint to release his *Favorite Recorded Scream*. Since his initial release, he's gone on to put out records by Thomas Bayrle & Bernhard Schreiner, Julia Scher, Barbara T. Smith, and Lisa Williamson. Much like with

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his other projects, it's equally about the parts and the whole, the process and the product, and the community and the connections.

In the spring of 2018, LeRoy installed an arrangement of umbrellas, metal stands, microphones, speakers, computer, electronics, cardboard, lenses, mirror, photographs, magazines, concrete, plungers, paper masks, packing tape, and acrylic at Potts, a now-defunct gallery in Alhambra (a suburb of Los Angeles), that had an absolutely killer run of exhibitions and events for three years. He released an exquisite record and a book of scanned raw-dog drawings to accompany the show. It was a truly exceptional exhibition; in fact, it was one of the best things I've seen or experienced in Los Angeles since arriving to this city 12 years ago.

For this exhibition at Gene's Dispensary, LeRoy is exhibiting one larger sculpture, featuring six neon light bulbs that will replace the central lighting of the gallery, as well as a selection of newer drawings. The drawings are executed in the evening after the day is done and everyone else in the home is resting or sleeping and LeRoy is left to himself, away from the comforts and tools of the studio. They are made with markers, pencils, pens, and paper – the same basic items provided to a child in art classes. The imagery is very dreamlike, very therapeutic, very cathartic; there are distinct visuals: cows, a camera, a piano, a ghost; there are distinct phrases: “comparative religion” and “overlapping gargoyles”; there are distinct references to pop culture: ESPN and *That '70s Show*. There is a psychoanalytic funhouse vibe to the whole affair that feels both particularly fitting for LeRoy and for this current moment in American history.

- Keith J. Varadi, April 2025

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Bovine Envoy, Pencil and pen on paper, 14 x 17 inches, 2022

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Camel Sony, Marker and pencil on paper, 14 x 17 inches, 2025

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Charity and Giving, Marker and pen on paper, 17 x 14 inches, 2023

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Comparative Religion, Pencil and pen on paper, 14 x 17 inches, 2024

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Eat the Garnish, Marker and pencil on paper, 14 x 17 inches, 2024

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Homeland, Marker and pencil on paper, 14 x 17 inches, 2023

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Overlapping Gargoyles, Pencil and pen on paper, 14 x 17 inches, 2024

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Piano Mattress, Marker on paper, 14 x 17 inches, 2023

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Puppy People, Acrylic and ink on paper, 14 x 17 inches, 2025

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Rabbit Kurt Dog, Marker on paper, 14 x 17 inches, 2023

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Sirius, Marker on paper, 14 x 17 inches, 2022

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Slicer, Marker and pencil on paper, 14 x 17 inches, 2023

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That '70s Show, Pencil on paper, 14 x 17 inches, 2023

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Carousel, Acrylic, wood, steel, light-bulb speakers, media player,
and audio recordings, 72.5 x 20 x 48 inches, 2024

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Carousel, Acrylic, wood, steel, light-bulb speakers, media player,
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