

Greenspon is pleased to present an exhibition of paintings and works on paper by Los Angeles-based artist and musician Rick Potts.

Bored by the commercial rock that flourished in post-1968 America, a teenage Potts formed The Los Angeles Free Music Society (LAFMS) in 1973, together with his brother Joe Potts, Chip Chapman, Tom Recchion, and a still evolving group of like-minded friends. Inspired by the absurdity, humor, and open-endedness of DADA and Fluxus, LAFMS made improvised music and noise with both everyday objects and self-made. LAFMS did not aspire to the high-minded seriousness of much experimental ‘music as art’. Instead, their style echoed Southern California’s unique mix of psychedelia, pop imagery, surf, and car cultures. These influences found easy alliance with the cross-disciplinary approach to art, music, and dance coming out of CalArts and The Otis Art Institute—where Potts studied from 1979 to 1982. Alongside peers such as Gary Panter—and having discovered the imaginary worlds of Japanese artist Shigeru Mizuki—Potts began to create his own fantastical, hybridized, beings and objects.

The exhibition includes 9 paintings created between 2013 and 2016, as well as a small selection of earlier work. These comic-surreal early works trace the development of Potts’ original creatures. *Fruits of Automation* (1995) are a series of small paintings on vellum that picture retro-future vehicles, and were studies for an album cover. Works on paper from 1975 show a series of animal-human-object amalgams. Collages made from TV Guide covers (circa 1983) are punk expressions of the artist’s anti-pop position, with the cover stars doodled into hideous creatures, and headlines reworked into slogans like, “Is TV Seeing Beyond the Gutter?”. Ironically, a television star pushed the evolution of Potts’ most recent paintings, which are the focal point of the exhibition. Potts responded to instructional painter Bob Ross’ philosophy of “no mistakes, only happy accidents”. Through his televised lessons Potts learned how to create his own landscapes, which he then populates with his unusual menagerie. The paintings recall Potts’ improvisational approach to music; they merge the traditional with the absurd and are intuitively built—bit by bit—according to which body part, animal, object, or architecture the artist feels compelled to add next. *Crane Bend* (2016) shows a frozen lake surrounded by glaciers. On the left bank, a large crane with a mop-like head and an absurdly enlarged nose bends down toward the right bank, on which stands a vessel inhabited by a dragon-like animal. Throughout all of his paintings, strange things lurk and live within subversive, folk landscapes. Potts reimagines familiar pictures through an alien lens and singular touch.

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