

TIF SIGFRIDS

HUFFPOST ARTS & CULTURE

Joe Sola's Kingdom For a Painted Horse (video)

Eric Minh Swenson



*Joe Sola with Riba, the Painted Horse, at Tif Sigfrids, Hollywood.
Photo by EMS.*

I saw TIF SIGFRIDS' booth in New York last May at the elite and much coveted Frieze Art Fair. They exhibited works by Los Angeles based artist Zachary Leener, and soon after a prominent art advisor suggested I pay special attention to the gallery's program. A few weeks later, I attended a group show at their intimate space in Hollywood where I met gallery director, Alex Couri. It was then that Couri told me their next exhibition would feature a live miniature horse. A live horse? It seemed worthy to mark on my calendar.

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It's not often one sees live animals languidly walking around an exhibition space. I've seen art patrons toting tiny dogs at openings in purses or on leashes, but never a horse, and especially not a miniature horse, hand-painted, and groomed for a centerpiece of an art exhibition.



The exhibition space at Tif Sigfrids. Photo by EMS

Chicago-native, Joe Sola, delivers quite an experience in TIF SIGFRIDS' latest oddity, *A Painted Horse* by Joe Sola (with Matthew Chambers, Sayre Gomez, Rudy K. Slobbeck, and others), which runs through August 8th. Sola delivers bewilderment and fascination in this latest performance piece worthy of visiting.

Cinematically, the experience of the exhibition, Sola says, harkens back to his love for early surrealist films of Salvador Dali and Luis Buñuel, which have made huge impressions on his artistic output. That surrealistic jolt can be further traced to the classic Blake Edwards film, *The Party*, starring Peter Sellers, in which a Hollywood film producer's dinner party is interrupted by a painted elephant, carrying counter cultural slogans. Not unlike Sola's exhibition, the addition of the animal makes the party.

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Micol Hebron's dog Klaus painted by Joe Sola on August 28, 2014 in preparation for this project. Photo by Joe Sola.

In walking distance to the Kodak Theater and Capitol Records, the gallery space was transformed from the traditional white cube into what looks like an interior-designed living room of aristocratic wealth, worthy of the Hamptons or Yorkshire, England. Prosperity adorns the dining room that Sola created with interior designer, Adam Straus. The walls feature original works specifically conceived for the exhibition by Matthew Chambers, Sayre Gomez, and Rudy K. Slobeck.

Eleven year-old Riba, the painted horse, will roam freely as if at home, however, may be viewed by the public through appointment or by stopping into the gallery during their Riba friendly hours of Wednesday - Saturday, 11am - 3pm, however; from 1-2 Riba takes a siesta and will not be on view. Just know that if you choose not to reserve a space prior to your visit, only four visitors are allowed in the gallery so as not to overwhelm the horse.

The experience felt was serene and contemplative as the handcrafted horse ate organic hay from Kansas and organic baby carrots directly from Sola's hand.

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*Joe Sola's Coldwater Canyon, 2015. pigment print on fiber based paper. 36 x 30 inches. Edition of 3, 3AP.
Courtesy of the artist*

The artist, working with a leading professional animal groomer, used creative vegetable-based dyes, specifically designed for animal grooming. According to the gallery, "Originally bred as pets for nobility in the 17th century and known to be amongst the rare species of animals in King Louis XIV's menagerie at Versailles, Sola embraces the animal's potential for visual pleasure and transposes an abstract language onto this rather unconventional painting surface."

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Sola told me that he was initially inspired to paint a horse when watching the Kentucky Derby a few years ago, when he saw a horse painted as a flower. He practiced with pet-friendly dyes on his friend's dogs. Having lived in Los Angeles for 18 years, Sola wears many hats, and works as a performance artist, photographer, painter, and visual artist. It was the moment that he found out about major competitions for creative pet grooming that inspired Sola to hire a professional pet groomer, later turning Riba into an abstract painting, while still revealing Riba's natural chestnut color.



Joe Sola's Beverly Hills Front Door, 2015. pigment print on fiber based paper. 26 x 30 inches. Edition of 3, 3AP. Courtesy of the artist.

In conjunction with the show, Sola has produced a series of six photographs of Riba in homes around Los Angeles, as well as in the studio of artist Mary Weatherford. The artist produced the body of work both as a visual explanation for his thinking behind the exhibition and to offer the opportunity to bring Riba's elegance into homes and institutions in a format that will long outlast her notable, yet fleeting, time as part of the gallery.

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See the video I did below:



Exhibition Hours and Information:

A Painted Horse by Joe Sola (with Matthew Chambers, Sayre Gomez, and Rudy K Slobeck) runs through Saturday, August 8th, 2015.

Wednesday - Saturday 11am - 3pm

(Riba is not viewable in the gallery from 1-2pm)

Appointments are strongly recommended as only 4 visitors at a time in are permitted in the gallery. To schedule an appointment email: info@tifsigfrids.com

This article is part of an ongoing photojournalism survey of art exhibition openings titled EMS N(art)rative. Through my lens I document a photographic essay or visual "N(art)rative" that captures the happenings, personalities, collectors, gallerists, artists and the art itself; all elements that form the richly varied and textured fabric of the SoCal art world. This reconnaissance offers a unique view for serious art world players to obtain news and information on the current pulse of what's in the now, yet capturing timeless indelible images for posterity and legacy. Here is EMS N(art)rative Twenty-Seven.