

Décor Meets, Mates with, Art

FOR THE CURRENT MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART SANTA BARBARA'S SATELLITE SERIES AT THE HOTEL INDIGO, TEXAS-BORN ARTIST ANDY COOLQUITT, KNOWN FOR USING FOUND OBJECTS AND TRANSFORMING SOCIAL SPACES, HAS STAGED A FASCINATING AND SURREAL "INTERVENTION" WITH THE HOTEL'S COMMON AREAS.

By Josef Woodard
News-Press Correspondent



Andy Coolquitt, "... i need a hole in my head"

When: through March 7, 2019

Where: Hotel Indigo, 121 State Street

Hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday

through Saturday, noon to 5 p.m.

Sunday

Information: 966-5373, www.mcasantabarbara.org

One measure of a city's cultural life is the presence of art in public and otherwise unexpected spaces—beyond the gallery realm—Hotel Indigo is doing its fair share for that cause in Santa Barbara. For a few years now, the chic-hip hotel near the sea has volunteered some of its common areas, lobby and hallways in service as "satellite" space for the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB). Some provocative, witty and visit-worthy contemporary art has landed in the hotel's interior over the past couple of years.

And something special and notably site-specific (and site-referential) has landed there at the moment, in the form of Andy Coolquitt's "... i need a hole in my head." The Texas-born artist has gained a reputation for his clever uses of found objects, his embrace and personalizing of influences from the Dadaist and Surrealist schools, and playful



Hotel Indigo reception with Andy Coolquitt lights.

COURTESY PHOTOS

way of retooling conventional wisdoms and toying with our well-intentioned view of how the world works.

His Hotel Indigo show has been described not as an exhibition but an "intervention" with the space, and the preconceived notions of what we expect from a hotel. As he has said, "I am always trying to disturb or confuse what is considered making art and what

is just considered living." In this case, the artistic "intervention" materials include colorful bath mats, puffy fabric potatoes, and tubular, almost Dr. Seuss-ish light fixtures which the hotel has gamely used to illuminate its reception desk and second story library area (the tinker toy-ish chandelier known as "big Alice.")

Art reference sneaks naturally into the picture, as with the fabric-strips-on-canvas pieces

called "Morris Louis bathrobe belts," alluding to the abstract/color field painter Mr. Louis' signature drippy palette.

In terms of effect, Mr. Coolquitt's art can be soothing or verging on laugh-out-loud outlandish. The latter effect is achieved upstairs, in the display where a sentry of mannequins are seen donning shag patches armed with a loony sort of "bathroom humor," a display with the self-explanatory title "bath mat outfits." Directly across that wily display, however, is the deceptively titled "everything painting," a canvas lightly speckled with a spare pattern of spray painted dots. It suggests Pointillism gone mild, and a jokily minimalist result, which seems anything but "everything"-oriented.

Following the exhibition's path through a short stretch of upstairs hallway, lined with the bland watercolor geometric abstractions whose main features are the found thrift store frames, we descend the stairs, tickled by the sight gag of a "carpet dot" high on a stairwell wall. Said "dot" is, in fact, a cushy toilet lid



"Miss Pibb pop'd a DP" by Andy Coolquitt.



"Carpet Dot" by Andy Coolquitt.



"I need a hole in my head" by Andy Coolquitt.

cover you might find in your aunt Mildred's condo.

Downstairs, the artwork includes some of his "Walmart paintings," in which the pointillist

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"Morris Louis bathrobe belts" seen behind "big Alice" by Andy Coolquitt.



"big Alice" by Andy Coolquitt.

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SCENE BRIEFS

Country at the Casino, continued

After last week's '90s-era traveling revue with Sammy Kershaw, Aaron Tippin and Collin Raye, country music of a more recent vintage lands at the Chumash Casino, with the arrival of young country star Dustin Lynch, on Friday, September 21. Mr. Lynch, who scored his first No. 1 single with "Where It's At (Yep, Yep)," and continued his chart-topper trend with "Hell of a Night," "Mind Reader" and "Current Mood"—from his 2016 album "Seein' Red"—is a Tennessee native whose studies in biology and chemistry were nudged aside by his creative urges and Music City fate. Friday, September 27 at 8 p.m. Chumash Casino Resort, 3400 East Highway 246, Santa Ynez. Tickets: \$55 to \$105. Information: 800-248-6274, www.chumashcasino.com.



Dustin Lynch.

COURTESY PHOTO

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spray paint series includes the asterisk-like Walmart logo, and a piece semi-pompously called "abstract contour composition"—basically consisting of vari-colored bath mats on a large canvas. In keeping with the artist's mission of blurring the art-functional line, the canvas itself serves to upgrade the everyday objects, by association, into the lofty realm of art.

Tufted potato-like objects protrude from a calming pink backdrop, with a pleasantly bizarre end effect, in the artist's "abstract potato composition,"

which plays like the recounting of an odd hotel dream. A smaller version of the potato piece (this artist is inclined towards ongoing series and variations on fixed themes) is tossed into the delirious assemblage mix of the title work, "... i need a hole in the head"—the title of which refers to his insatiable appetite for cast-offs and new material for his massive "found object" inventory. He needs another kitschy bath mat, for instance, like he needs a hole in the head. Apparently, he needs both.

Hanging in the lobby is one of the more senses-grabbing works in the show, "Miss Pibb pop'd a DP," an irrational assemblage with nods to the influence of

proto-Dadaists Marcel DuChamp and Kurt Schwitters. The mad material list for the work includes a suspended and upended plastic chair, a tangled nest of wigs, a metal dress form and a hoodie which has been cut-up and "deconstructed." An absurdist delight to behold? Yes, but it also flies by the power of its own liberated logic and feeds off the built-in audacity of its presence in the lobby of a working hotel—albeit a hip one.

Hotel Indigo's latest art happening makes for a must-see occasion, when in the neighborhood, or looking for a ripe and even art-minded excuse to visit the neighborhood.

BLUES

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know, Muddy's music is really the beginning of learning how to play music and how to play slide (guitar). A lot of people will listen to Muddy to learn how to play slide guitar, still to this day. And the chords and stuff that Muddy did back in the day were phenomenal, man.

For students of the blues, says Mr. Primer, Muddy Water's music "is a learning project and will probably be that way forever. The words in his songs still have the same meaning and feeling today that they did all those years ago when he first sang them."

Speaking of his duet partner Mr. Corritore in the '00s, Mr. Primer comments that "Bob and I go way back, man. He's from Chicago and that's where we met. He knew me before I knew

him back in the '70s. He used to see me play at Theresa's Lounge (where primer played in the house band). I remember seeing him there, but I didn't know him then."

Ironically, the pair connected after Mr. Corritore had relocated to Phoenix, Arizona and presided over the well-known blues club The Rhythm Room, where the guitarist-singer played with Magic Slim on more than one occasion. "I played at a blues fest there in the day and then at his club that night. It went on and on like that and then we finally hooked up to record. He liked what I did and I liked what he did."

While Mr. Primer hasn't gained the notoriety his legacy might have deserved by this point in his career, by the unjustly modest standards of the blues trade—by contrast with the overblown dimensions of the pop music

world—his reputation is only growing as he goes.

"Man," he said, "I never could have imagined back then that I'd be going all these places and playing the blues. I never thought it could have come to this, but I always did want to be a musician. I guess if I wasn't musician, I'd just be working a regular job and trying to pay bills. (Making a living at music is) easier now than when I first started. I played, played, played back then and didn't make no money. It was hard back then, but I'm still not making much these days, either."

But, with the help of players such as the supportive powerhouse Mr. Corritore, he's making a sound rooted in a great American music form, spreading the gospel of the Chicago blues, commanding attention and building up his fan base as he riffs and goes.