



[performing arts]

HUMANEYES

Judi Rotenberg gets a beast infection

PROFILE BY JULIA REISCHEL | REISCHEL@WEEKLYDIG.COM

The title of the Judi Rotenberg Gallery's summer show makes one thing clear: Art and academia are the only places where atrocious, unreadable puns can still seem profound.

"We were thinking about how all of these artists 'humanize' these creatures and that there seems to be a specific focus on the eyes," says gallery co-director Kristen Dodge of *Humaneyes*, a showcase of four vastly different artists who paint, draw, photograph and sculpt animals.

The theme invites all manner of academic poofery about the meaning of anthropomorphism. Don't buy into it. It's much more fun to coo over the outlandish beasties as if you're in front of a bunch of high-art LOLcats. Humanized animals aren't for analysis; they're to make humans say "Oooo."

Jill Greenberg gets this. Her monkey photographs are all eye candy and zero underlying message. She's best known for her series of photographs of spittle-flecked toddlers crying for sweets, but this show is all about her super-saturated simians, which she shoots like fashion models. They're luscious, dignified and shockingly human—the cover of *Vogue* as shot by Jane Goodall. Of course, Greenberg makes them that way by Photoshopping real human eyes over their ape ones.

Rune Olsen, a sculptor who makes animals out of newspaper, masking tape, wire and graphite, uses the same trick, adorning his creatures with glass eyes



meant for mannequins. His work is more subdued and less delightful than Greenberg's, but there's some gee-whiz here, too: *Bear Favor*, a pair of snarling, nuzzling bears with baby-blue glass eyes, looks like a feral Downy commercial, all cuddles and dismemberment.

Like Olsen, Ria Brodell takes herself a touch too seriously—which is odd for someone whose art consists of sketching the fantastical creatures that inhabit an elaborate imaginary world. Calling herself an "explorer," Brodell chronicles things like "wormbunnies," "birdmen" and a giant, toothy whale that sports baggy Ted Kennedy eye pouches.

HUMANEYES
7.12.07-8.4.07
JUDI ROTENBERG
GALLERY
130 NEWBURY ST.,
BOSTON
617.437.1518
OPENING RECEPTION
THURSDAY,
7.12.07
6PM-8PM
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Unlike Brodell, Jennifer Amadeo-Hall doesn't have grandiose conceits. She's into abstract, vaguely Freudian imagery, sure—but really, she just likes monkeys. A painter who works with oils, her work is intended to make the viewer fill in the blanks with meaning. She slips in animals as symbols, which leads to bizarre scenes like *Highlanders*, in which an abstract gorilla in an abstract kilt sits next to a baby gorilla rolling its eyes. Goofy? Yes. Awesome? Yes. Deep implications for humanity? Who knows?

And really, who cares? Animals are best when you don't overthink them. Don't come to *Humaneyes* with comp-lit intentions. Come for the woobums. @