

OREGON ARTSWATCH

MAY 3, 2021

VIZARTS MONTHLY: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS, COLLECTIVE INQUIRIES, AND SPACE ROCKS

by Lindsay Costello



Paul Lee: *Tambourine Heart*

April 24 – May 22, 2021

Adams and Ollman

418 NW 8th Ave (by appointment only)

Tambourine Heart showcases artist Paul Lee's newest collages, part of an experimental practice he's cultivated since the 1990s. Lee expertly combines textures of paper, towels, canvas, and more with an aesthetic of play, marvel, and metaphor. Accompanying Lee's works on paper are a series of tambourine sculptures, emphasizing his confidence with a wide range of materials.

titled *315 Tenth Avenue*, Lee's New York City address in Chelsea, one of the gayest neighborhoods on earth. Many gay Houston men will recognize that address as being right around the corner from The Eagle NYC bar.

Lee's apartment was probably only slightly bigger than the washcloth rectangles on the gallery floor, so we can imagine his proximity to other gay men's bodies that he experienced as a very young, newly arrived British lad. The "wall" of towels between the rooms is a barrier, but it also speaks of shared erotic imaginations. Washcloths like these were known as cum rags, and it's hard not to see the energy and potential that notion brings to this sculpture.

Lee has been with his partner, sculptor Paul Gabrielli, for 18 years. Gabrielli is also quite well-known for artworks referencing queer domesticity. To get safely from their Chelsea apartment to their Bushwick studios without entering the fearful subways during the quarantine, they have rented a car and are living a life that is as constrained as everyone else's.

While Lee's work appeared in a group show at Texas Gallery as early as 2004, his 2018 show at that gallery was his first trip to Houston. I sent pictures of the exhibition to Jack Pierson, who responded that it looked "breathtaking—somehow beyond whatever I could have hoped for a Paul Lee magnum opus."

While travel for artists currently remains impossible in most situations, artwork can still move freely. Houstonians should be grateful that the artist and the gallery are allowing us to see this poetic and moving show in the middle of a quarantine.