

SHOWSTOPPER MIKE SHINE: FLOTSAM'S WONDER WORLD

SEPTEMBER 18–OCTOBER 30
941 GEARY
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Houdini was buried alive only to resurface, Lazarus was brought back from beyond, and Mickey Rourke resurrected from obscurity in *The Wrestler*. Resurrections, especially if done well, can place you among grand company. Not that Mike Shine was in need of a resuscitation or reanimation or anything, but his alter-ego, Flotsam, held a personal resurrection revival to open his solo creation that helped complete a transformation of 941 Geary into a full bizarre-world carnival called *Flotsam's Wonder World*.

The possibilities that an expanse like 941 Geary, the latest space opened by Justin Giarla of White Walls and Shooting Gallery, present to an artist in a solo show capacity are both daunting and inspirational. The 3,000-square-foot converted warehouse turned art gallery leads an artist to one foregone conclusion: you either go big and build one gigantic universe for your artwork, or don't attempt anything at all. Create an experience. Mike Shine, being no stranger to building environments for his work (see Shine's Shack built for the San Francisco Museum of Folk and Craft Art last year), was the perfect artist to approach 941 Geary solo by creating a full carnival populated with games, performances, trailers, and tents, all filled with art. The evolution from old

car garage to *Flotsam's Wonder World* was seamless.

"I prepared for the show in much the same way working carnies do—no sleep and the terror of your opening night deadline," Shine said after the opening. "The installation doesn't reference a specific carnival, but rather the one that looms inside our collective minds. We've all been there, but at different times and places."

"When we opened 941 Geary, I knew I had to come out of the gate strong," Giarla told me. "Mike had been consistently throwing down large and impressive installations for about two years, constantly outdoing himself and many others. He had tossed around the idea of doing a large circus/carnival show, and what better time or place than in this new space." When asked about the challenge Shine was facing as a solo artist in such a large expanse, Giarla confessed, "For better or worse, Mike has set the bar so high it's going to be exhausting keeping it up at this level, but I've been keeping the bar high for years now and love the challenge it brings." —*Evan Pricco*

