

Tom Secret

Curated by Trenton Doyle Hancock

January 31 – March 8, 2008

Opening Reception Thursday, January 31, 6:00 – 8:00pm

“Even though his imagery implies a passage of souls from one plane to the next, the earthen grit of his hues encases his figures, binding them to mortal confinement. Tom’s characters hardly acknowledge each other; instead they just go about their business in the shadows.”

– Trenton Doyle Hancock

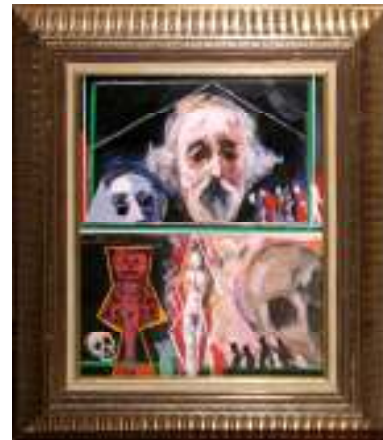
Untitled, 1998
Pastel and mixed media on paper
30” x 22”



Louisiana-based artist Tom Secret, has always accompanied his work as a printmaker with countless numbers of drawings and paintings. Incredibly prolific, the artist possesses thousands of notebooks containing his work. Embracing the fantastic and psychological over the real, Secret’s influences include such varied imagery as the early illustrations of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by John Neill, childhood storybooks like *Journeys Through Bookland* and the plethora of images employed by the celebration of Halloween. Since childhood, he has used artwork as a means of escaping his surroundings and to, as the artist describes, “...fall into my own form of ‘Neverland’ or down Alice’s rabbit hole.”

In his first solo exhibition in New York, the works on view comprise poignant examples of the artist’s unique imagination and recurring themes from the past several years. Secret generally begins each piece without a specific subject in mind; rather, armed with these influences and his own life experiences, he lets each piece materialize on its own. This also speaks to the fact that he never titles his works, opting for them to speak for themselves. The winged figure in *Untitled*, 1998 (above, left) could be viewed as, among other things, an angel or a vampire and is a recurring subject in his work. This ambiguity is mirrored in Secret’s own life experiences, as the piece was created just before the bittersweet event of the artist’s retirement from his position as Associate Professor of Visual Arts at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Secret began doing self portraits while in undergraduate school and has continued throughout his career, often inserting his own image alongside fantastical characters like in *Untitled*, 2006. Oftentimes the artist finds frames, preferably ones which he considers to be “non-academic,” and then creates a piece specifically for the frame. Flat, geometric shapes and eyeless, isolated figures mix with the artist’s muted, earthen palette to create a cryptic world where the line between the ethereal and the substantial is blurred. The inclusion of the artist’s own likeness in these works underlines the complete incorporation of his work and inspirations in all facets of his life and environment. They provide the viewer with the perfect windows into which one gets an unedited glimpse of the artist’s own version of the traditional “fairy tale.”



Untitled, 2006
Acrylic and collaged intaglio
on canvas board
23 1/2” x 19 1/2”

(More, over)

For additional information, please contact Ryan White, Programs Assistant, CUE Art Foundation, 212-206-3583, or email ryan.white@cueartfoundation.org

ARTIST'S BIO:

Tom Secrest was born in Columbus, OH, in 1942. He received his BFA and MFA from Ohio University in Athens, OH in 1966, and 1968 respectively. His work has been featured in a variety of exhibitions, including the *One Man Show*, University Art Museum, University of Louisiana, Lafayette, LA (1998); the *First International Exhibition of the National Academy of Fantastic Art*, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, DE, (1986); and the *Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Prints Exhibition*, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA, (1981). Calvin Harlan wrote about Secrest's work in *The New Orleans Art Review* in June of 1986. His pieces are in a number of prestigious collections including The Print Collection of The New York Public Library, New York, NY; The Print Collection of Harlan and Weaver Intaglio, New York, NY; The Print Collection, New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA; and The Collection of The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA. This exhibition at CUE Art Foundation marks Secrest's first solo show in New York University art museum

ABOUT CUE:

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