

**ASTRONAUTS, MONSTERS &
SILICON FLOWERS @ GREEN
STREET**

by BEN SLOAT

On view until September 9th at the Green Street Gallery is the multimedia exhibition *Astronauts, Monsters, and Silicon Flowers*. A dark and quirky rejoinder to the end of summer and the arrival of sober autumn, this show is the Labor Day of gallery exhibits: an entertaining escapade with complex layers of historical reference.

Jeff "Jeffu" Warmouth, he of the familiar *Rollie Fingers* moustache, presents a hilarious video with vegetable characters, *Day of the Cabbage*. Sort of a Godzilla meets 50s B movie Sci-Fi meets *Veggie Tales* (the surreal Christian children's vegetable puppet show), Warmouth fills his Cabbage film with delicious little details (like Mr. Butternut) and subtle clues that warrant multiple viewings of his ten minute piece. Added to the HD quality and smooth animations of the video itself are the three dimensional effects of its presentation. Housed in a matzoh covered monitor and surrounded by characters from *Day of the Cabbage*, the video is far more experiential than the norm. Besides admiring the fabrication of the actual props and its production value, you can verbally admonish the cabbage character in person after particularly gruesome scenes! One other note is that the unexpected rumbling of the Orange Line below adds enormously to the physical experience of the video, analogous to the vibrating Playstation control, writ large.

The Orange Line makes another appearance in Leah Johnstone-Mosher's *Garden*, sitting in patches of AstroTurf. The artifice of these creations opens insight into the architecture of the gallery space, Green Street's retro futuristic ceiling for example, is something I've never noticed before, but fits well as a "sky" lording over the plastic "earth." Now and then, the flowers sway in the "breeze" brought by another effort of the subway. Curator Matt Nash explains that the flowers will have further elements to them, LCD



Leah Johnstone-Mosher, *Garden*, AstroTurf, wire, lights and circuit boards, 2006



Scott Listfield, *Chewbacca in cloud city with art*, oil on canvas, 2003



lights that flash off and on as the viewer walks around them, this would be a marvelous electronic addition, furthering its interactivity.



Jeff Warmouth, video still from *Day Of The Cabbage*, video with mixed media installation, 2006

Of greatest interest are the astronaut paintings of Scott Listfield, who will be having his second solo show at Locco Ritoro in the South End next month. Based on the astronaut of Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, this astronaut is an "explorer of the present" and finds himself in scenes rife with fascinating cultural juxtapositions. In one painting *Chewbacca in Cloud City with Art* the astronaut is at an art exhibition on Lando Calrissian's home planet, staring at minimalist sculpture by the likes of Donald Judd, Sol Lewitt, and Richard Serra. Chewbacca is in attendance, carrying a disassembled C-3PO on his back. Another painting, *Pass the Courvoisier*, has the astronaut fondling what looks like Cezanne's oranges next to a deco juicer with an image behind of Busta Rhymes and Pharrell in front of a Damien Hirst dot painting, *whew!*

Listfield had successfully compressed the familiarity of characters, artworks, and places in our cultural imagination and through their intersection, redeveloped the sense of wonder which initially surrounds their impact. Furthermore, these cultural objects and personalities become a revelation to the various desires and intentions of the society/era which created and supported them, and show changes of meaning in the friction of their juxtapositions. In this sense, the painting *Pass the Courvoisier* blends the showy materialism and easy confidence of contemporary commercial hip-hop with the utopian mechanical escapism of art deco and the space age to create a strangely new and unsettled space to exist in.

In another painting, *Astronaut in Subway*, the astronaut waits in a subway station accompanied by Damien Hirst's eponymous white shark in formaldehyde. Shark and astronaut face the ubiquitous advert for Starbucks as the train pulls in (an orange one, coincidentally). The Starbuck character, however, is a reconstructed cultural object as well. Derived from the first mate of the *Pequod*, he was the only crew member in *Moby Dick* not interested in pursuing the white whale, for he was interested in other explorations, and "uncommonly conscientious for a seaman."

He might as well have been an astronaut.

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"Astronauts, Monsters, and Silicon Flowers" is on view until September 9th at Green Street Gallery at the Orange Line Green Street T stop in Jamaica Plain, MA

All images are courtesy of the artists and Green Street Gallery.

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