

John Bankston: The Explorer

May 21 – July 3, 2015

Reception for the Artist: Thursday, May 21, 5-7pm

Like Dorothy in the magical Land of Oz, John Bankston's latest protagonist, The Explorer, navigates a fantasy region he calls The Rainbow Forest. We follow this character through three episodes, watching and participating as he winds his way through the confusion and the beauty of the imagined country and its creatures. Each of the three chapters of the series is comprised of a set of drawings punctuated by a painting. In "Farewell," the Explorer says goodbye to his friends and is off, mechanical birds and butterflies accompanying him as he follows the path. "The Encounter" finds the Explorer surprised by a group of small men wearing animal masks. Initially welcomed and draped with flower garlands, the garlands become bindings and The Explorer becomes their captive. Leaving the viewer to interpolate the narrative between chapters, "The Cave" is the final chapter in this visual saga. One of the small men leads the Explorer to a cave and together they come upon a being emerging from the rock walls. When they leave the cave they encounter an Abstracticator. Bankston's inspiration for this robot creature was a visit to the Sloss Furnaces in Birmingham, Alabama – a century old abandoned blast furnace.

Bankston was born in Benton Harbor, MI and earned his MFA in painting from the School of the Art Institute, Chicago, IL. John Bankston is well known for using a coloring book format to portray complex subjects of race and identity with visually striking images that allow viewers to develop their own narrative. He was recently the subject of a solo exhibition at Krasl Art Center, St. Joseph, MI entitled "Dream to Dream: The Art of John Bankston." Bankston was included in the 2013 California Pacific Triennial, at the Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach. Other recent exhibitions include The Bearden Project, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, Rehearsals: The Practice and Influence of Sound and Movement, Savannah College of Art and Design Museum of Art, Savannah, GA, the SECA Anniversary Exhibit at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, and the traveling exhibition "30 Americans." Bankston's work is represented in major private and public collections, including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the de Young Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, The Studio Museum in Harlem, The Museum of Art and Design New York, the Norton Family Collection and the Rubell Family Collection. He currently lives and works in San Francisco.

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**RENA
BRANSTEN
PROJECTS**

John Bankston: The Explorer
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1



Farewell, 2015
Acrylic, watercolor, colored pencil on paper
22 x 30 in.

2



The Explorer, 2015
Oil on linen over birch panel
40 x 30 in.

3



Down the Path, 2015
Acrylic, watercolor, colored pencil on paper
22 x 30 in.

4



Whiz Whir, 2015
Acrylic on paper
22 x 30 in.

5



Strange Machine, 2015
Oil on linen over birch panel
40 x 30 in.

6



Hiding, 2015
Acrylic on paper
22 x 30 in.

7



The Encounter, 2015
Acrylic, watercolor, colored pencil on paper
22 x 30 in.

RENA BRANSTEN PROJECTS

8



Flowers to Chains, 2015
Acrylic, watercolor on paper
22 x 30 in.

9



Into the Cave, 2015
Acrylic on paper
22 x 30 in.

10



Rock Monster, 2015
Acrylic, watercolor, colored pencil on paper
22 x 30 in.

11



Setting the Scene, 2015
Oil on linen over birch panel
40 x 30 in.

12



Close Up, 2015
Oil on linen over birch panel
40 x 30 in.

13



Come Closer, 2015
Oil on linen over birch panel
40 x 30 in.

14



Stranger and Stranger, 2015
Acrylic on paper
22 x 30 in.

15



All Assembled, 2015
Oil on linen
48 x 54 in.