

HYPERALLERGIC

ART

A Clown-Themed Art Show Advocates for Radical Joy

In an era of uniquely corrupt politics, looking to clowns seems like a way to experience radical joy



Emma Orlow 2 hours ago



NASHVILLE — Back in 2016, it seemed clowns would only continue on their trajectory as icons of all things creepy, as dozens of reports poured in around Halloween of clowns wreaking havoc in the woods.

But then, of course, Trump was confirmed to presidency. In contrast to the corrupt figures at the helm of the circus that is our American government, most clowns now seems quaint. They are a conduit, even, for expressing feelings of frustration. Last year, Ugo Rondinone's exhibition at The Bass in Miami Beach, "good evening beautiful blue," was a stand-out favorite for many who attended Art Basel Miami. It featured glum, #sadboys sculptures in clown attire.



Rebecca Morgan and Ron Geibel, "Clown Crown Jug," porcelain

At Nashville, Tennessee's Elephant Gallery, The Clown Show is bringing visitors the silliness we so desperately need in these dark times. The exhibition features representations of fun clowns on a lamp by artist Alexandria Olivia Hall, a clay miniature of a cake by Rachel Growden, and other clown-related items. The Clown Show is the first-ever open call for Elephant Gallery. Artist Alex Lockwood formally opened the gallery last year, and it has since hosted 12 exhibitions. The show is split into themed areas: a creepy area, a textile area, a ceramics area, and a pastel area — comprising a dizzying maze of clown-themed rooms.

Some of the other 50-plus artists clowning around at the exhibition include artist-couple CHIAOZZA and sculptor/painter **Rebecca Morgan**. Morgan, who collaborated on a porcelain jug shown Ron Geibel at the gallery, told me, "In my own work, I employ aspects of clowny over-exaggerated caricature. ... Ultimately, I believe clowns are an employment of escapism; We can digest our own dramas and empathetically see aspects of ourselves in the circus-like minefields we roll around."

"When I watched the Instagram feed and stories of the opening of The Clown Show at Elephant Gallery in Nashville, it definitely felt like it was an opening of comic relief," says

Morgan. “It was light and absurd and genuine and truly funny- doing all the things that are sometimes hard to find in the darkness of our times.”



A clown-costumed art lover at The Clown Show

In an era of uniquely corrupt politics that directly attack the civil liberties of the queer community along with environmental regulations spurring the impending doom of climate change, looking to clowns seems like a way to experience radical joy — that is, to take pleasure in the completely unpretentious, totally original aspects of life. Let’s just let ourselves have a little fun.

The Clown Show continues at Elephant Gallery (1411 Buchanan Street, Nashville, Tennessee) through November 10.