

**Trenton Doyle Hancock** (b. 1974, Oklahoma City, OK, lives and works in Houston) was featured in the 2000 and 2002 Whitney Biennial exhibitions, becoming one of the youngest artists in history to participate in this prestigious survey. His work has been the subject of one-person exhibitions at the University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum, Tampa; Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah and Atlanta; Weatherspoon Museum, Greensboro; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami; Institute for Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Olympic Sculpture Park at the Seattle Art Museum; Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh; and Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Hancock's work is in the permanent collections of several prestigious museums, including the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands; and Il Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Trento, Italy. Hancock earned his BFA from Texas A&M University, Commerce, and his MFA from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University, Philadelphia.

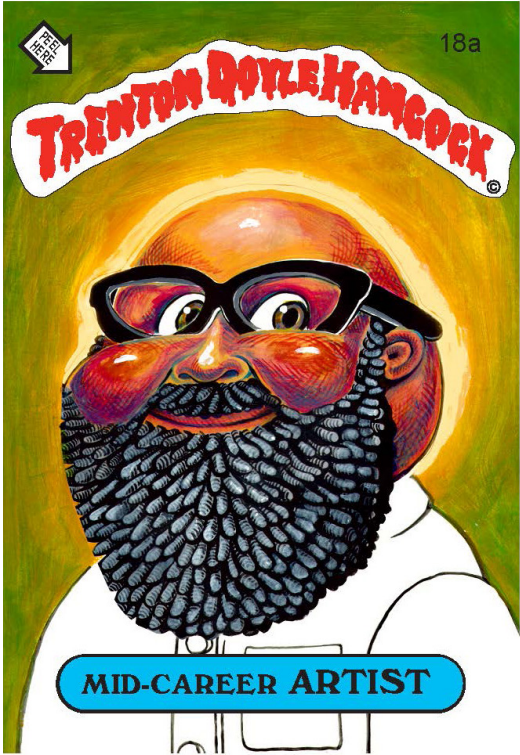
The Artist Talk is generously supported by the Robert Lehman Foundation. The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis offers special thanks to James Cohan Gallery, New York.

*Trenton Doyle Hancock: The Re-Evolving Door to the Moundverse* is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Wassan Al-Khudhairi, Chief Curator.

### Related Programs

**Artist Talk: Trenton Doyle Hancock**  
Saturday, January 20, 11:00 am

**RE: Superheroes and Villains**  
Thursday, March 29, 6:00 pm



In conjunction with his exhibition at CAM, Hancock produced a limited edition Garbage Pail Kid card, available for purchase in CAM's shop and online at [camstl.org/shop](http://camstl.org/shop).



**Contemporary Art  
Museum St. Louis**  
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**Gallery Guide**  
Contemporary Art  
Museum St. Louis

January 19–  
April 22, 2018



# Trenton Doyle Hancock

## The Re-Evolving Door to the Moundverse



*Good Vegan Progression #5, 2007.* Hand-cut synthetic, natural, and digitally printed fabric layered and stitched on fire-retardant theater curtain. 216 × 648 inches. Courtesy the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York.

*The Re-Evolving Door to the Moundverse* invites viewers to enter Trenton Doyle Hancock's epic narrative of a battle between good and evil. The Moundverse, a mythological world where the protagonists Mounds, hybrid creatures who are half plant, half animal and live in forests, are in constant threat from the villainous Vegans, beings who live underground and whose sole purpose is to destroy or exploit all Mounds.

Growing up in a religious home in Paris, Texas, music, storytelling and the Bible were central to Hancock's upbringing. Fusing together these influences with his avid interests in comic books, films, cartoons, and video games, Hancock has developed intricate stories around the birth, death, life, and afterlife of these characters. To tell these stories, Hancock employs a wide range of materials, including painting, sculpture, and video.

Although the stories are sometimes funny, they often provide commentary on politics, race, identity, class, and social justice. A personal thread can be found across his practice, although it is more codified in his earlier work. In his more recent work the personal

comes to the forefront, which is evident in this exhibition with the inclusion of several self-portraits.

In 2008, Hancock was invited by Ballet Austin to collaborate on an original ballet. *Cult of Color: Call to Color* brought to life the mythological saga of the Mounds and Vegans. A forest populated with colorful trees is the setting for the ballet, which is centered around the character Sesom (Moses spelled backwards) a Vegan prophet, a *good* Vegan, who discovers color through the aid of Painter, a mother-like spirit that embodies the essence of color. Installed on CAM's project wall *Good Vegan Progression #5* is the backdrop Hancock created for the ballet.

Visit the library upstairs to see a short clip of the Ballet Austin performing *Cult of Color: Call to Color*.



**Audio Tour**  
Visit [camstlaudio.org](http://camstlaudio.org) or ask for an iPod at the front desk to hear directly from the artist and curator on the audio tour.



The Origin Story

Homerbuctas was the patriarch of an average prehistoric ape family. With his wife Almacroyn they had two children, Brouthescam and Cromalyna. One afternoon while out looking for food, Homerbuctas came upon a beautiful field of flowers. He was so overwhelmed by its beauty that he began to pleasure himself and ejaculated into the field. A chemical reaction took place between his semen and the flora, which gave rise to the Mounds. Homerbuctas continued to go out to this field and soon enough there were hundreds and thousands of Mounds. Out of jealousy for the attention their father gave to the Mounds, Brouthescam and Cromalyna slaughtered several hundred baby Mounds. Without arms or legs, the Mounds were unable to fight back and trembled with fear. Hundreds of wobbling Mounds caused the earth to split open. The earth swallowed Brouthescam and Cromalyna and they were banished to the lower realm forever. Hellbent on going back above ground to destroy the Mounds, Brouthsecam and Cromalyna lay together and conceived the Vegans, who would become the great enemies of the Mounds.

Language as a Tool

Using comic books, films, and cartoons as sources of inspiration, Trenton Doyle Hancock is also inspired by words. Language plays a major role in many of his works. He often uses elisions—the omission of a sound or syllable—with grandparents’, parents’, or siblings’ names. He plays tricks with spelling and with interchanging letters; for example the painting titled *Ferroneous & The Monk* is a play on the name Thelonious Monk, the American jazz pianist and composer who is known for his improvisational style.

Pattern and the Personal

The pattern seen in a number of the paintings in the exhibition is one that Hancock copied from the floor tiles in his grandmother’s home in Paris, Texas. He spent a lot of time in her home when he was growing up. She would watch TV or talk on the phone while he laid on the floor and drew.

Cast of Characters

Mounds

Hybrid creatures, half plant, half animal, living in forests; depicted in the shape of a mound with black and white stripes. They were created thousands of years ago when a human male ejaculated into a field of flowers; Mounds symbolize acceptance and love.

Mound #1 The Legend

The original Mound and the most despised by the Vegans.



*The Legend Attempts to Put Out His Own Fire of Life*, 2003. Mixed media on canvas, 78 × 78 inches. Courtesy the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York.

Vegans

Underground beings whose sole purpose is either to destroy or exploit the Mounds; they represent oppression, bullying, and all those who force their beliefs on others.

Painter

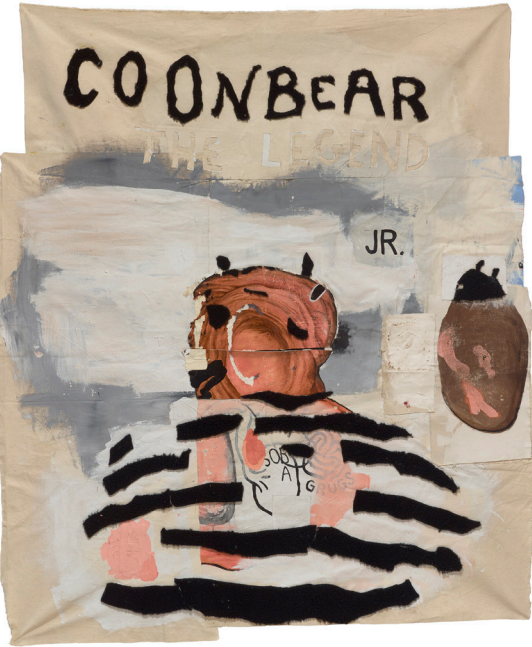
Mother spirit who is energetic, joyful, and represented by color.

Loid

Father figure who can only see black and white and is represented by text.

Torpedoboy

Son of Loid and Painter and protector of the Mounds, an unheroic superhero with an inflated ego. Torpedoboy possesses superhero strength, but his human emotions—especially his pride—prevent him from performing his heroic duties. Hancock first developed Torpedoboy in 1984 when he was ten years old.



*Coonbear: The Legend*, 1997. Acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 60 × 60 inches approx. Courtesy the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York.

Sesom

(Moses spelled backwards) a Vegan prophet, a good Vegan, who discovers color through the aid of Painter.

Bringbacks

They live inside Mound Jr. and are sent out into the world to bring things back to Mound Jr.



*8 Back Icon Series: Bringback—Striped Henchman, No. 5102*, 2016. Mixed media on canvas, 66 x38 inches. Courtesy the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York.

*Coloration Coronation*, 2016. Acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 90 X 132 inches. Courtesy the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York.

