

Los Angeles Times

See why a new art show at the Hammer Museum will remind you of a comfy living room



In 2004, the artist Joseph Holtzman, founder, creative director and publisher of *Nest: A Quarterly of Interiors*, closed the wildly innovative design publication to focus on his painting. Fans were crushed, writing loving epitaphs to the award-winning magazine, but at the easel, Holtzman pursued his artistic vision with equal determination.

Now a selection of his imaginative works from 2006-11 is on exhibit at the Hammer Museum. Abstract oil paintings on polished slate and marble reference historical figures such as Mary Todd Lincoln, Stephen Sondheim and Jane Austen and are hung in frames Holtzman designed with reclaimed chestnut wood from old barns. For devotees of fine and decorative arts, the show, on view through Sept. 20, is an eye-opener.

Holtzman transformed the exhibition space into an artful salon — complete with furniture from his home. The finished room is a somewhat startling symphony of tradition and modernity and bold blasts of color.

David A. Keeps, "See why a new art show at the Hammer Museum will remind you of a comfy living room."
The Los Angeles Times (September 1, 2015), accessed online.

“I wanted to create this sense that you are walking through a green haze, as if you were in a painting by Degas,” Holtzman says. “So I painted the ceiling a rather bright yellow green to cast light into the room.” Rather than paint the walls, he covered them in light-absorbent, pale green Danish felt, covering the seams with a strip of gold felt that emulates the look of old museum spaces such as the East Gallery of the Frick Collection in New York City. To balance the green, Holtzman covered the floor with a vividly red Dutch Art Nouveau carpet, circa 1910, from his residence.

“I wanted the paintings to be in a comfortable domestic setting,” says the artist, who also furnished the room with a 20th century Colonial Revival wooden chair produced by H.T. Cushman Manufacturing in North Bennington, Vt., and plush upholstered seating. Holtzman re-covered two \$300 vintage armchairs and a pair of what he calls “Park Avenue style” sofas in a variety of tropical bark cloth, chintzes and elaborate toiles.

“I used only period furniture and I must have looked at about 11,000 pieces of fabric online, and every last one of them was vintage,” he says. “I’ve come to like Americana and rural country scenes.” Among them: A print based on a landscape by the early 20th century Iowa painter Grant Wood and a toile created for the Eisenhower White House.

“The furniture is not art,” Holtzman insists. And it is absolutely meant to be used by visitors to the exhibition: “I want the sofas and chairs to be sat on,” he adds. “If I get them back in rags, I’ll be happy.”

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