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NYC Gallery Shows
THE NEW YORK LIST,
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by Emily Nathan



Todd James
Earl Grey
2012
Gering & Lopez, New York



"Todd James," installation view
of *Vandal's Room*, 2012,
Gering & Lopez, New York

Todd James

Gering & Lopez
730 Fifth Avenue
Mar. 1-Apr. 21, 2012

Todd James (b. 1969), a self-taught New York street artist who came up painting subway trains, has forged a distinctively cartoon-ish painting style that is part Bob Thompson, part Adult Swim. Throughout his career, he has designed album covers for the likes of Iggy Pop and the Beastie Boys, and it's safe to say that he is one of the few OGs to have successfully crossed over into the fine art world -- though he keeps it low brow (his 2010 show at Gering & Lopez was a Looney Tunes assault on "the pornography of war").

James' new obsession is the phenomenon of Somali pirates raiding shipping boats in the Arabian Sea. Large-scale acrylics on canvas depict the masked marauders in colorful head scarves, brandishing AK47s while they sip tea against the sunset or smoke cigarettes. Vibrant and sensual, redolent of Matisse's *Red Studio* and his various *Odalisques*, the pictures give a contemporary twist to the notion of "Orientalism." And who better to take an interest in today's sea-faring vandals if not a one-time graffiti artist?

Also included in the show is *Vandal's Bedroom*, an installation that James created for L.A. MOCA's recent "Art in the Streets Exhibition." Nestled into a corner of the gallery, this closed little room's interior is visible through a dirty window or a peep-hole in the door. Inside, its walls are covered with hundreds of ink-on-paper graffiti tags that reference the history of the art, and its floors are strewn with spray cans and iconic DVDs. Its dimensions vary and its price is "negotiable."

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