



Howard Fonda, Leigh Tarentino and Susan Graham: Inside and Out at Mixed Greens

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No one walking down 26th street could miss the opening of three new exhibitions at Mixed Greens last Thursday, featuring work by Howard Fonda, Leigh Tarentino and Susan Graham, an exhibition that began before visitors entered the gallery.

On the first day of spring, when the skies in Chelsea were glowing pink, *The Night Hours*, Leigh Tarentino's three-piece window installation (on view until May 23) began the whimsical play of outside and inside that would continue into the gallery's hidden spaces. Framed by the brick wall of the building, layered fabric panels, some as ghostly and transparent as filmstrip, and others as opaque and literal as construction paper, make cutout collages where Tarentino turns a house and a tree on their heads. The middle pane evokes a landscape that Yuriy Norshteyn's hedgehog might have wandered to on his way to the deep dark forest.

SVA students, hipsters and the usual Thursday night gallery grazers were the creatures following the footprints in the snow to the main event: Howard Fonda's big, motley tonal paintings (up through April 19). As guests added Budweiser to the buzz of spring fever, eyes were consistently drawn back to Fonda's indulgent, Matissian curves and floating Chagallian icons, hypercolored canvasses whisking away any remaining winter blues. Brushy blocks of color, some in a palette of maroons, greys and subdued teals, and others in tropical greens and pinks, form a tile-like mosaic around the vibrating eyes, faces, hands, fingers and flower that inhabit Fonda's *Everything and Nothing*.

If the Tarantino's triptych brought us in and Fonda's bright characters kept us there, a hidden surprise was in store to draw us even further—while keeping us stubbornly out. *Spiral Landscape*, Susan Graham's coy peephole secret, was a whimsical surprise for anyone willing to squint through the looking glass: an intricate kaleidoscope of lace-like porcelain and sugar sculptures, bone-white spiral of towers, trees, flowers and other semi-ephemera. The site-specific delight (on view until May 23) kept its aloof distance—no entry allowed. Tearing our eyes away to gaze at Fonda's frank faces and bulbous appendages one last time, we headed into the night, yet another spring tease.

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