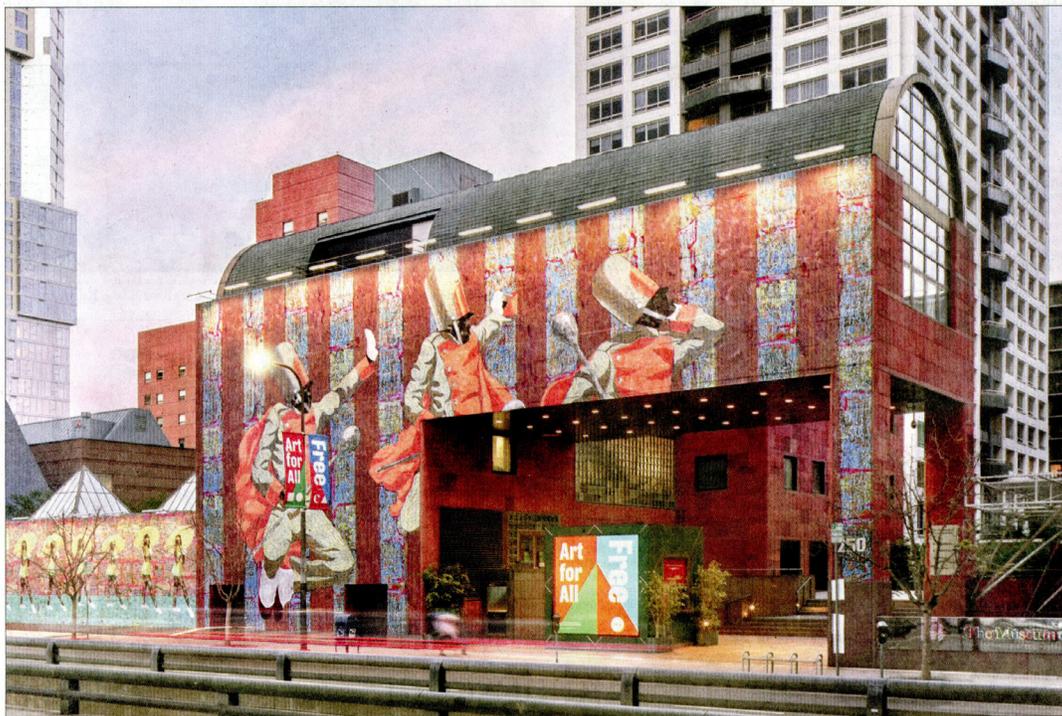


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CALENDAR

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DEREK FORDJOUR'S vibrant mural "Sonic Boom," inspired by the Jackson State University marching band, graces the exterior of MOCA Grand Avenue in DTLA.

TELEVISION REVIEW

Dying to see Nadia's return?

Season 2 of 'Russian Doll' is ingenious, radical, deeply felt.

ROBERT LLOYD
TELEVISION CRITIC

Given how firmly it closed its circular plot, and the relatively peculiar particulars of its narrative — "relatively" since it ran on an engine oft-lifted from "Groundhog Day" — it's somewhat surprising to see a second season of "Russian Doll," the excellence of its 2019 first season notwithstanding.

In that fairy tale of New York, described by Natasha Lyonne's main character, Nadia, as "the one about the broken man and the lady with a death wish that got stuck in a loop," Nadia and her spookily entangled metaphysical twin, Alan (Charlie Barnett), keep dying until life looks better. It's a Borscht Belt Samsara

THIS 'BOOM' RESOUNDS

Derek Fordjour explores culture and race in an experiential gallery show and a new mural.

BY LEIGH-ANN JACKSON

Standing in front of Derek Fordjour's mural "Sonic Boom," you can almost hear the drum major's whistle chirping and the drum line keeping the beat. The marching band and prancing dancers forming Fordjour's newly unveiled procession down Grand Avenue are just that lively.

The 5,400-square-foot mural currently blankets the facade of the Museum of Contemporary Art with vibrant colors and a sense of both exuberance and pageantry. It's part of the MOCA Building Art series of outdoor artworks and is one of two major installations Fordjour debuted in Los Angeles in late March.

Also on display in an exhibition at David Kordansky Gallery, the New York-based artist's latest works display facets of African American culture that are steeped in tradition — from the widely celebrated to the obscure to the surreal.

Fordjour's inspiration for the MOCA commission was the Jackson State University marching band, known as the "Sonic Boom of the South." Watching the historically Black college ensemble perform in an

nual band competitions was a highlight of his childhood in Memphis, Tenn.

He presented the museum with four mural options — in addition to the HBCU band tribute, he submitted depictions of unsung African American rowing crews and horse jockeys, as well as portraits of Black males presented in the style of urban memorial murals. He wanted the entire museum staff to vote on the selections in order to instill in them a sense of personal investment in the final piece.

"Everyone from the head curator to the security and maintenance staff would have a voice in choosing which option they went for," Fordjour explains of his process. "I really wanted to make sure that we had diversity of opinion, lived experience and geography in the people that made this decision. I'm not there. This is *their* building. They really are the stewards of the experience."

He enlisted still more Angelenos to help him stage "Magic, Mystery & Legendman," his ambitious ode to arcana at David Kordansky Gallery. The immersive exhibition, which runs at the Mid-Wilshire [See Fordjour, E6]

It's so crazy, it makes sense

How 'Everything Everywhere All at Once' filmmakers put meaning in the absurd.

BY JEN YAMATO

From IRS audits to sentient rocks to hot dog hands and beyond, the mundane and the insane collide with the profound in "Everything Everywhere All at Once," the Michelle Yeoh A24 action sci-fi pic that's drawn at times ecstatic acclaim since opening in limited release last month.

Where did all these zany ideas come from? Well, where do any ideas come from? Ask filmmaking duo Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, known as Daniels, and they might have a different answer each day.

On this particular afternoon in this particular universe, as they Zoom together in Kwan's lightly cluttered home office in Los Angeles, they trace a line back to their last movie, "Swiss Army



"FLOAT" (2022) by Derek Fordjour is one of many works in "Magic, Mystery & Legerdemain" that depict historical Black magicians.

Magic deep dive

[Fordjour, from E1] space through May 7, explores magic as it relates to race and American history. L.A.-based master magician Kenrick "Ice" McDonald, filmmaker Numa Perrier, floral artist Maurice Harris and other local creatives lent their talents to transform the typical gallery experience into something uncanny, eccentric and educational.

The show features paintings, sculptures and a live magic performance sparked by the artist's research into historic African American illusionists such as Richard Potter, Ellen E. Armstrong and Black Herman, as well as Candomblé rituals practiced by enslaved Africans in Brazil. This deep dive into the past was triggered by Fordjour's bafflement surrounding present-day events.

"I started thinking about magic as an allegory for privilege," he says. "You know the Kyle Rittenhouse verdict? The young man who murdered those people? He's out! I have friends who have done more time for far less than murder, so that felt like a magic trick. Like, 'Wow! How did he do that in plain view?'"

"There is something about my vantage, as a Black person living in this society, where the rules just seem to



FORDJOUR'S "JAZZLAND" (2022) is also on display at the David Kordansky Gallery show, open now.

Derek Fordjour

What: "Magic, Mystery & Legerdemain"

Where: David Kordansky Gallery, 5130 W. Edgewood Place

When: Tues-Sat 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Through May 7. Magic performances by Kenrick "Ice" McDonald, 2 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays

Info: (323) 935-3030, davidkordanskygallery.com

What: "Sonic Boom"

Where: MOCA Grand Avenue, 250 S. Grand Ave.

When: Ongoing
Info: (213) 626-6222, moca.org

change conveniently in ways that affirm the white supremacist structure in which we operate. Magic was a perfect way to discuss some of this."

To begin his journey through the looking glass, as it were, gallery visitors must first push past a thick, velvety curtain and step into a dimly

lit vestibule. There, pages from the *Financial Times* line the walls and ceiling. Think of it as a behind-the-scenes reveal — the artist's signature painting style is achieved by applying rich, saturated colors atop layers of cardboard and that same newspaper's pale pink pages.

A small black-and-white television mounted on the wall plays vintage footage of a televised performance by magician Frank Brents. Below it, a podium holds an upturned top hat filled with a fresh floral bouquet. Here, again, the artist offers a sneak peek of what awaits beyond the entryway. Each week, Harris creates a different "floral portrait" inspired by the exhibition's paintings. The two collaborators have dubbed the podium space "the Top Hat Residency."

"I was interested in how a floral arrangement can interact with the illusion of a magic trick or create the spark that magic does," said Harris, the owner of the Echo Park floral design studio Bloom & Plume. "I've been pulling in stems like allium because they have a firework quality

to them, James Storie orchids because they're flowy but explosive, and I've been drawn to a specific palette of roses because they mirror the color vocabulary that I often see in Derek's work."

The paintings on display beyond the antechamber play on themes of spectacle, public perception and sleight of hand. The first piece, "Cargo," is a tribute to Henry "Box" Brown, an enslaved Virginia man who famously mailed himself in a crate to abolitionists in Philadelphia.

In "Cottillion," prim debutantes and their tuxedo-clad partners dance around a ballroom, representing Fordjour's view of the centuries-old rite as a sort of illusion in which middle-class Black families enshroud their challenging social circumstances in order to create a moment of grandeur.

"Birth of Showtime" depicts Lakers legend Earvin Johnson Jr. in the early days of his basketball fame. The subtext here is that the NBA star's nickname was "an invention of the white gaze," as Fordjour puts it. "He didn't name himself Magic. His mother did not name him Magic. A white male reporter did," he says. "I found that to be really interesting because this idea of magic in Black people, through the white imagination, is something that persists."

In keeping with the show's experiential approach, Fordjour is also staging a live magic show honoring Black Herman (born Benjamin Rucker), whose 1925 book inspired the exhibition's title. At 2 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays, visitors can file into a small theater constructed to evoke elementary school auditoriums or

church basements. There, modern-day magician McDonald portrays Herman in a 20-minute production written and directed by Perrier. Along with Nubia Bowe, who plays his assistant, he creates onstage illusions while acting out highlights of Herman's fantastical exploits.

Perrier infused "The Legend of Black Herman" with elements that range from kitschy to sensual, adding notes of vaudeville, carnival acts and church sermons. A solemn usher, a suited organist, melodramatic narration and glitzy costumes all help set the mysterious tone.

"I want the audience to lose themselves in the magic and, just for those moments, let it overtake them," she says. "I want them to feel the sense of wonder, pain and seduction that's all inside of the show."

Suspension of disbelief is key when delving into any magician's world, but Herman's more so than others. Fordjour was drawn in by Herman's over-the-top claims of learning magic from a Zulu tribe and by stunts like his famed "buried alive" trick, wherein he appeared to inter himself for three days prior to a performance, then rise and lead awed onlookers to his stage show.

"He was a little bit of a hustler, in my opinion," Fordjour says. "I liked that I didn't know how much of Black Herman to believe and not believe."

"That's the crux of the [magic] show. Numa and I worked to really foreground the question: Are you going to allow me — as a Black man — to deceive you in plain sight? Are you going to afford me that?"

TV Highlights

SERIES

Survivor (N) 8 p.m. CBS

Chicago Med Dylan and Maggie (Guy Lockard, Marlyne Barrett) treat a drunk patient who claims to be sober. 8 p.m. NBC

The Goldbergs Beverly (Wendi McLendon-Covey) decides to crash Adam and Brea's (Sean Giambrone, Sadie Stanley) vacation. 8 p.m. ABC

The Masked Singer (N) 8 p.m. Fox

The Wonder Years Bill (Dulé Hill) loses his place in the band. 8:30 p.m. ABC

Beyond the Edge The celebrities celebrate Mike Singletary's birthday. 9 p.m. CBS

House of Payne Calvin (Lance Gross) uses footage of Curtis (LaVan Davis) in a new ad campaign. 9 p.m. BET

Domino Masters (N) 9 p.m. Fox

Home Economics (N) 9:30 p.m. ABC

Assisted Living Phillip (Alex Henderson) is struggling with the SAT. 9:30 p.m. BET

Good Sam (N) 10 p.m. CBS

A Million Little Things (N) 10 p.m. ABC

The Ms. Pat Show A visit from Ashley and Brandon's (Brittany Inge, Vince Swann) father. 10 p.m. BET

Good Trouble (N) 10 p.m. Freeform

Snowfall Franklin (Damson Idris) feels gutted in the season finale. 10 p.m. FX

Body Parts (season finale) (N) 10 p.m. TLC

SPECIAL

Changing Planet Airing in conjunction with Earth Month, this new special provides updates from M. Sanjayan of Conservation International on current conditions in seven biomes. 8 p.m. KOCE

Freddie Mercury: The Final Act This new documentary chronicles the final chapter in the life of Queen's lead singer. 8 p.m. The CW

Cypress Hill: Insane in the Brain This new documentary from filmmaker Estevan Oriol ("LA Originals") profiles the genre-defying hip-hop group. 8 p.m. Showtime

SPORTS

Baseball The Atlanta Braves visit the Dodgers, noon, SportsNetLA; the Angels visit the Houston Astros. 3:30 p.m. BSW

TALK SHOWS

Today Vicky Nguyen; Jill Martin; Dawn Russell. (N) 9 a.m. NBC

Good Morning America Niecy Nash; Kaley Cuoco; Alexander Skarsgard; Bonnie Raitt performs. (N) 7 a.m. ABC

Live With Kelly and Ryan Rosie Perez; Niecy Nash. (N) 9 a.m. ABC

The Drew Barrymore Show Mary Louise Parker. (N) 2 p.m. CBS