

FRANK HYDER

Frontier Invention #4, 2013

Mixed media print/paint combination on Mylar, 144 x 80 in



COURTESY PROJECTS MIAMI GALLERY
PHOTO CREDIT JOSPEH PAINTER

MARK ZIPOLI

Final People

She's like the rain in Los Angeles, he thought, as he stood before his office window and stared out through the venetian blinds. He was watching the measured steps of a blonde sixteen-year-old girl walking up Gower Street. Like the occurrence of rain in LA, she was measured: the moments of her loss of control were scarce, few, never sure to be expected, unlike so many of her young homeless friends, whose tempers and spirits carried them exposed, vulnerable, angry from one street to the next. Today, as the winter sunlight collapsed over her head and lay upon the parked cars and bone-dry asphalt, she bore the burden of being used to things.

Social workers weren't expected to wait for their clients eagerly, but he did, for her, the girl named Puppet. For the past three months now, three mornings a week, Puppet showed up at five minutes to nine at the neighborhood drop-in center for homeless youth. A man in midlife, like himself, in the middle of Hollywood, in the middle of a decidedly dismal career at helping people, wasn't supposed to peek routinely through his office blinds while waiting for someone like her. But he did, even though he hated the sun; and how Walter Vann hated the Los Angeles sun: It exasperated him. It nearly blinded him, being so sharp and unavoidable. It was overwhelming. Yet he mounted a useless stand against the bars of sunlight that tilted and squeezed themselves through the blinds. They serrated the shadows of his torso, yet he stood his ground waiting for her, hands behind his back; and, as usual, watched her walking up the block.

He hurried over to his desk. It was laid out, as it had been nearly thirty times in the past three months, with a bagel and cream cheese positioned before a medium-size container of regular coffee and a small, unopened bottle of orange juice. They were set on the left third of the desk, twelve inches from the side and ten inches from the front—always in the same place. He draped a napkin over the coffee lid and then rested a second napkin on top of the bagel. Also in attendance, as usual, was a white paper bag standing upright as evidence that the food had been purchased on Sunset Boulevard. His coffee was off to the right. Behind him stood a six-foot chimney vent heater; it was balanced on either side with two tightly packed bookshelves. Walter then heard the signal, like small bells in his head: He heard the collected voices of youth gathering