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## Groovy – James Hilger



D. Dominick Lombardi, Tattooed Landscape #8, oil on canvas, 1979-2006.

*Hidden right out in the open is a space that is at once living and dying on 11th Avenue. It's a notebook factory, but the notebooks are all gone. The building is scheduled for destruction. Condos have swooped down and taken yet another swatch of metropolitan land in their scaly claws.*

*But these bungalows of prey wait—perhaps*

two years, maybe more.

*The artists saw, electrify, hoist, paint, clean, hammer, rivet, weld, nail, rig, join—they peel the embossed tin off the ceiling of the old factory and hammer it lovingly to the walls of their new kitchen as the wrecking ball is set to swing; a lovely balance.*

*Inside, there was a group brush painting and a small army of chairs made green under the papery light of two hanging saturnalian globes fashioned from disposable plates. Around a corner, half-lit by a square of overhead sky, I saw something huge and wooden in an elevator shaft. The perfect wood floors of heaven, and the gentle bulges of a crab apple are the only ways to describe the dream-like blonde form that I saw.*

*The building is huge and alive, like an elephant lying in a row of cars breathing amidst the Toyotas. It's beautiful to watch.*

*This is the home of First Run, a space curated by artists Margaret Roleke and Melinda Hackett. "Groovy," First Run's inaugural exhibition, celebrates every bit of the art of Melinda Hackett, D. Dominick Lombardi, Laura Watt, and Joan Wheeler.*

*Melinda Hackett's pictures are petri dishes full of the pathogens that might cause happiness, or at least something that isn't grist for this often-mediocre mill. I can see them in my mind's eye now—full of cartoon lace that learned how to swim in our thoughts. In what can only be called an alchemical mode of painting, D. Dominick Lombardi has learned how to tattoo landscapes, and he shows us this trick over mountain ranges of peacock feathers and energy. In this arresting series, Lombardi superimposes jet-black slices of swiss cheese, tribal body art and snatches of cuneiform language over his previous work in a composition that might have been lifted from the fuse-box of a flying saucer. Laura Watt's paintings sing off the eyes like the jewels worn by jewels. Gentle hues repeat toward God.*

*Watt says it best herself; "Pattern and color are old strategies for knowledge...I embellish,*

*so that some can wish for austerity." Joan Wheeler's photographs of stiff-furred dogs and gorilla-headed soldiers are perfect for the bedrooms of any of the Adams' children. They are lit by the portion of the mind that still recalls fear for the art sometimes found in the home of distant relatives. Dogs Night Out, features several inebriated, dog-headed card players (one in acid washed jeans, I believe) around a table and in front of a painting of two deer next to a lake. More bizarre, perhaps, is that I found myself trying to guess which stuffed dog was the best card player.*