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LAWEEKLY

AN ARTIST CREATED FAKE TED TALKS RECITED BY CHILDREN BY CATHERINE WAGLEY



Still from Liz Magic Laser's *The Thought Leader*

Courtesy Various Small Fires

In this week's art picks, a kid gives a speech that sounds more inspirational than it actually is.

5. Puzzle paintings

Sadie Benning titled her show at Susanne Vielmetter "Fuzzy Math," after the phrase used to account for blurry facts and also, as the gallery's press release points out, to justify dubious political positions. So it's funny how whimsical her paintings are. She constructed them out of sanded, resin-covered pieces of wood, and they're kind of like puzzles. The best one might be *Red Mono Maze*, a tangle of rounded, curvy red shapes that lead up to a wonky grid. *6006 Washington Blvd., Culver City; through Feb. 14. (310) 837-2117, vielmetter.com.*

4. Woman without an ear

Filmmaker Harmony Korine and artist Rita Ackermann collaborated on two paintings for Hannah Hoffman's new group show, "Image Search." In *Trouble Is Coming* (2010), earthy, messy abstract marks cover the bottom third, below a printed-on-vinyl image of an overdressed woman in garish makeup. That's a theme in this show: overdone, hard-to-forget faces from past and present. In French artist Francis Picabia's *Masque* (1949), a woman smiles creepily on one side of the framed canvas and a disembodied ear appears on the other. *1010 N. Highland Ave., Hlywd.; through Feb. 28. (323) 450-9106, hannahhoffmangallery.com.*

3. Bed box

You can climb into Kim Ye's sculpture at Venice 6114, though you might not know to do so until you see someone else climbing out. It's a white box with a waist-high opening covered by a brown curtain. Once inside, you're lying on your side on sheets, facing a monitor that shows the artist's face. She's on her side, too, probably nude, moving up and down slightly. If you put on headphones, you hear her "ah" sounds. It's comfortable to be in there, even if it seems it shouldn't be. *6114 Venice Blvd., Culver City; through Feb. 28; by appointment. art@venice6114.com, venice6114.com.*

2. Reacting to the cage

Dan Finsel's show at Richard Telles Fine Art takes up two rooms. There's a phone booth-sized black box at the center of the first, with guttural cat sounds emanating from it. The electrical cord that stretches from the box to the wall looks kind of like a tail. In the second room, a smooth, peach-colored sculpture of lips attached to buttocks stands on a wooden stick. It's sort of charming, like a cartoon creature that needs looking after, but the 30-minute film playing behind it is not. Finsel touches a cage, then reacts intensely, moving in slow motion, sweating, looking anguished. It's that range, from playfulness to cuteness to distress, that makes the show compelling and confusing. *7380 Beverly Blvd., W. Hlywd.; through Feb. 14. (323) 965-5578, tellesfineart.com.*



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1. The kid who would rather his head shrivel up

Walk up the narrow corridor between the sidewalk and Various Small Fires' back entrance and you'll hear a woman's voice saying, "My mind is my own." It's mantra-like, and you'll also hear it faintly in the background once you're inside the gallery, sitting in theater seats, watching a boy give some kind of TED talk. The star of artist Liz Magic Laser's new video, *The Thought Leader*, he's self-possessed. But he sometimes seems unnerved by his audience of grown-ups. They're mostly serious listeners, but they laugh at unexpected times as he talks about things such as preferring to have his head shrivel up and fall off rather than give up independent choice. Given that smooth, uniform TED Talk style, all the talk of independence starts feeling sinister. *812 N. Highland Ave., Hlywd.; through Feb. 21. (310) 426-8040, vsf.la.*