

ARTS & BOOKS



'HOME GROWN' KEEPS IT LOCAL
POP MUSIC, F4



ARMENIAN DIASPORA MEMOIRS CONNECT FAMILIES
BOOK REVIEW, F7

ART REVIEW



Images from Richard Heller Gallery

OLI EPP'S "Biosphobia" (2019) is representative of his paintings of humanoids caught up in technology, often to their detriment.

Icons in the age of tech

BY DAVID PAGEL

Oli Epp, born 1994, may be today's Roy Lichtenstein. Or tomorrow's Ed Ruscha. Or the next day's Philip Guston.

Or all of the above. Or maybe none. At Richard Heller Gallery, the London-based painter's U.S. solo debut, "Contactless," raises big questions about art, life and technology — and then ducks and runs.

If you look at art because you want to find out what other people think, you probably will be frustrated by Epp's crisply delineated pictures of humanoids doing what humanoids do: behave like people while getting us to see the folly of our behavior.

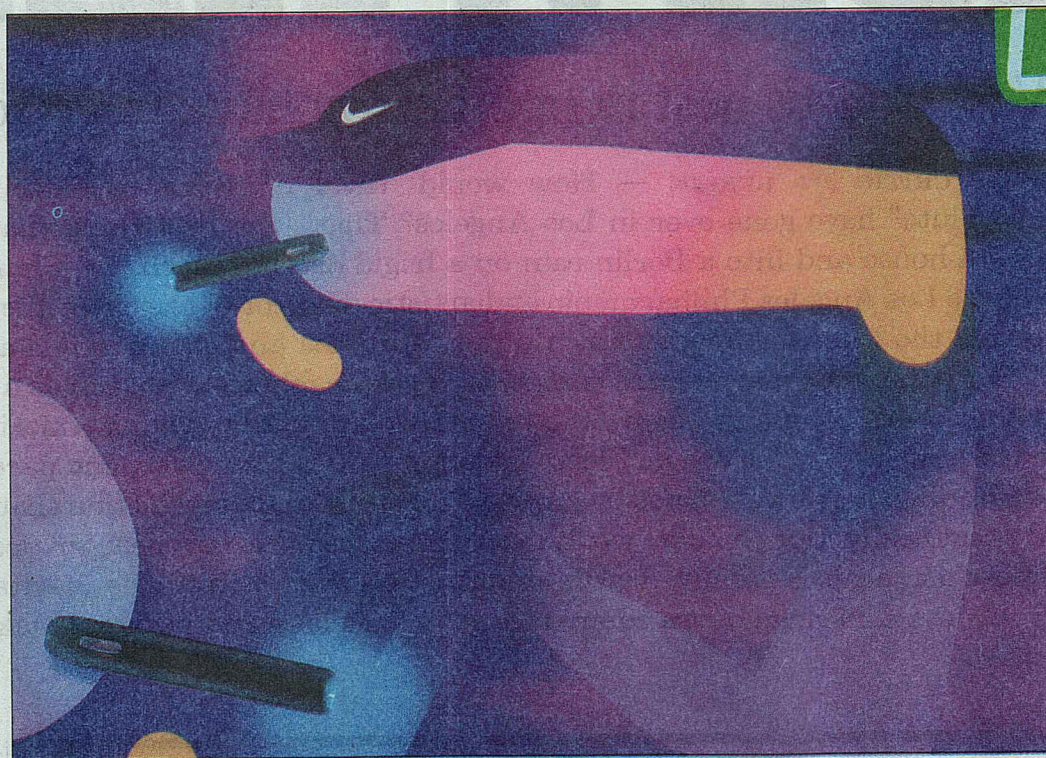
But if you look at art because you want to think about the world we live in, you'll find lots to ponder. Contradictions — and the conflicts they can trigger — take pointed shape in his super-streamlined paintings.

In the old days, icons were images that stood in for powerful personages, deities or spirits. Today, icons are stylized symbols that appear on screens of all sizes, giving users instant access to vast volumes of info. Epp's paintings have both feet firmly planted in this reality while casting an eye on the past.

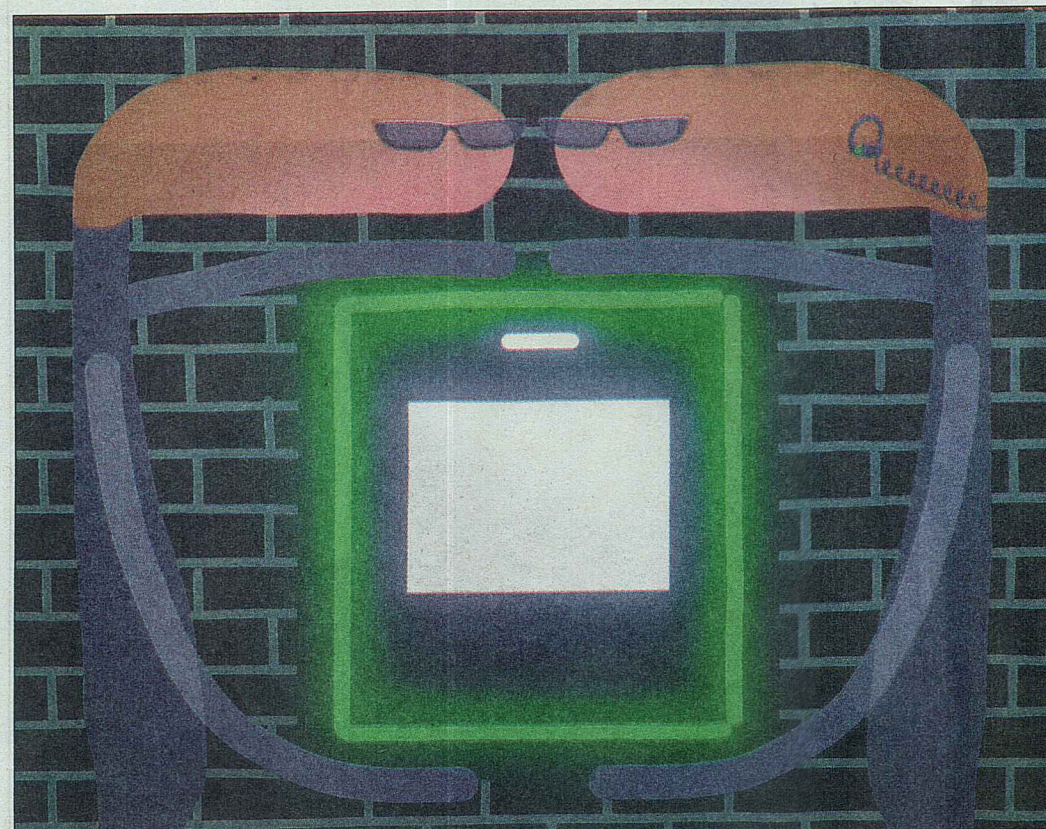
Like Lichtenstein's canvases that riffed off of comic-strip imagery, Epp's color-saturated compositions bring the glow of illuminated screens to the surfaces of hand-painted pictures. Like Ruscha's illusionistic graphics, they deflect the sanctimony that makes art seem more serious — and difficult — than it is. And, like Guston's cartoon characters wearing Klan-style hoods, Epp's faceless folks turn anonymity inside-out, catching the public in acts we'd prefer to be left out of.

Epp's paintings set you to thinking about the ways communication technologies transform messages along with the people who send and receive them.

Richard Heller Gallery, Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica. Tuesdays-Saturdays, through May 4. (310) 453-9191, www.richardhellergallery.com



NOW at Richard Heller Gallery, Epp's first solo U.S. show includes "Grape Vape" (2019).



INSTANT message, yet meant to make you stop and think: Epp's "Security Theft" (2019).

FESTIVAL OF BOOKS

They're in no mood to forgive

BY JULISSA JAMES

An entranced audience hunched forward in their seats at USC's Bovard Auditorium to hear authors Roxane Gay and Laurie Halse Anderson discuss their latest on rape culture. And despite the conversation's sensitive nature, they laughed. A lot.

"All the time we tell women to forgive — [forget] forgiveness," quipped Gay, using a different F-word. "I have no interest in [forgiveness]. It's boring. It's too easy."

During a 10:30 a.m. panel at the L.A. Times Festival of Books on April 13, Times columnist Robin Abcarian moderated a discussion with Gay and Halse Anderson about their latest books that deal with the repercussions of rape culture.

Gay edited the 2018 anthology "Not That Bad: Dispatches From Rape Culture," a collection of contributors' essays exploring the spectrum of survival; Anderson's 2019 memoir, "Shout," tells of her own assault as a 13-year-old through free-verse poetry.

Gay's been crowned a cultural critic for her New York Times bestsellers "Bad Feminist" and "Hunger," but her latest, she told The Times, isn't about her at all.

"[The anthology] has nothing to do with me, and has everything to do with the 29 women and men who contributed their work and had really interesting, nuanced things to say about what it means to live in a world where rape culture is a thing," she said.

Contributors of "Not That Bad" include actress Gabrielle Union, who writes about the "stain" her own sexual assault left; Zoë Medeiros, who examines learning to carry the burden of her assault; and a writer called xTx, who penned the essay "The Ways We Are Taught to Be a Girl" — which, Gay told the panel, is one of her favorites in the collection.

When Abcarian asked why it took both authors so long to disclose their rape, they explained that silence is fueled by the deep-seated shame that rape culture instills in survivors.

"I was just ashamed," Gay said. "Then I wasn't, thank goodness, and then I wrote a book."

When it comes to rectifying rape culture, work needs to be done beyond using empowerment slogans on our clothing and bumper stickers, both authors said. It's about action.

"If you're going to spend your money that way, then make sure you spend an equal amount of money, and/or time, letting your legislature know that women need to [be heard]," said Halse Anderson, who was wearing a "Got consent?" T-shirt.



KENT NISHIMURA Los Angeles Times
"I WAS just ashamed," said Roxane Gay. "Then I wasn't, thank goodness."