

OCTOBER 2017

COMPLIMENTARY

# Berkshire & Greater Capital District HOME & STYLE

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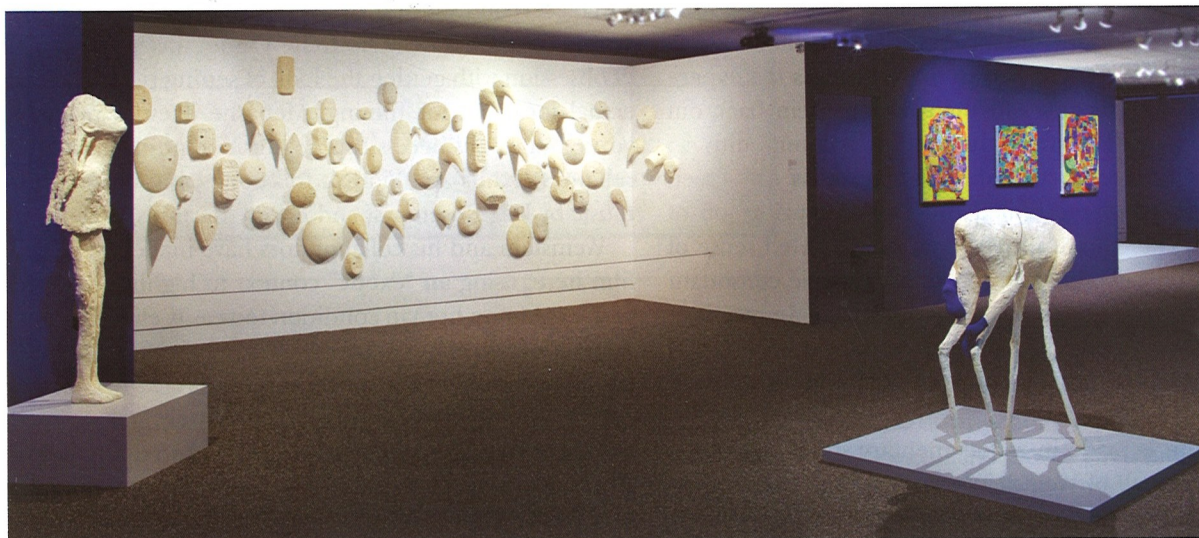


## ART

by Jesse DeGroodt

# Now Showing

*Chasing the Tale*



The Albany International Airport Gallery. Photo by Arthur Evans



Fernando Orellana, *The Popular Panic*, oil pastel on board, 2017. Photo by Arthur Evans

Not every discovery in one's life is The Best Thing Ever, but this one qualifies as Pretty Decent. It was only recently that I became aware of the **Albany International Airport Gallery** in Albany, NY. I'm almost ashamed to admit, and it came none too soon. The current exhibition "Chasing the Tale," running through February 26, 2018, is a not-to-be-missed, high-spirited mélange of works from area artists Jason Blue Lake Hawk Martinez, Kenny Harris, Ira Marcks, Fernando Orellana, Amy Podmore, Jeff Starr and Gerda van Leeuwen.

Upon stepping into the gallery, there was the overriding impression I'd stepped into the album cover for the Beatles' "Magical Mystery Tour," with some "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" thrown in. By the time my tour of the airport's gallery space was complete, it seemed as though I'd fully partaken of a phantasmagorical buffet. My senses were stuffed.

At one point, I overheard a fellow gallery visitor remark to her companion of the "whimsical quality" of the exhibition. Truly. But let's not let the sense of playfulness that pervades "Chasing the Tale" be mistaken for lack of gravity and insight.

The works of Gerda van Leeuwen are a splendid example. While at first glance one might reason her anthropomorphic works are furry, innocuous creatures, look more closely. They are us, their faces and situations

depicting them striving for social position and other aspects of the human condition. Born in The Netherlands, van Leeuwen moved to Roxbury, NY, where she now works and teaches printmaking. She also served as gallery manager from 2009-2014 at the Longyear Gallery in Margaretville, NY, where her work is on permanent display.

Gallery Director Kathy Greenwood, who previously put in 14 years as the gallery's curatorial assistant under Sharon Bates, points out that the airport's Art & Culture Program was "conceived as a way to showcase artists of the region," roughly defined as falling within 100 miles of Albany, including southern Vermont, western Massachusetts and Central New York. "A lot of artists are being displaced out of New York City because of things like rising rents. We have an incredibly diverse population of artists in our area."

The 2,500-square-foot gallery space is funded entirely by the airport, Greenwood said. Its space is pre-security, ergo, anyone walking in the front door can stop in undeterred by a TSA check. Also, there are site-specific exhibitions throughout the Albany terminal. Greenwood makes exemplary use of every nook and cranny available to her, with the accompanying "fundamental advantage that we have no permanent collection. There are continuing opportunities for area artists."

Particularly eye-popping is the work of Jason Blue Lake Hawk Martinez. It would be difficult to improve on this self-analysis of his art as "a union between the sappy sweet and the grotesque. I am interested in dualities. I am illustrating a narrative of my heritage, spirituality, and the clown persona. My visual world is laced with references to my (Tiwa) Pueblo culture and contemporary pop symbolism. I am attempting to compose a beautifully twisted fairy-tale landscape of apocalyptic neo-mythology and identity reclamation."

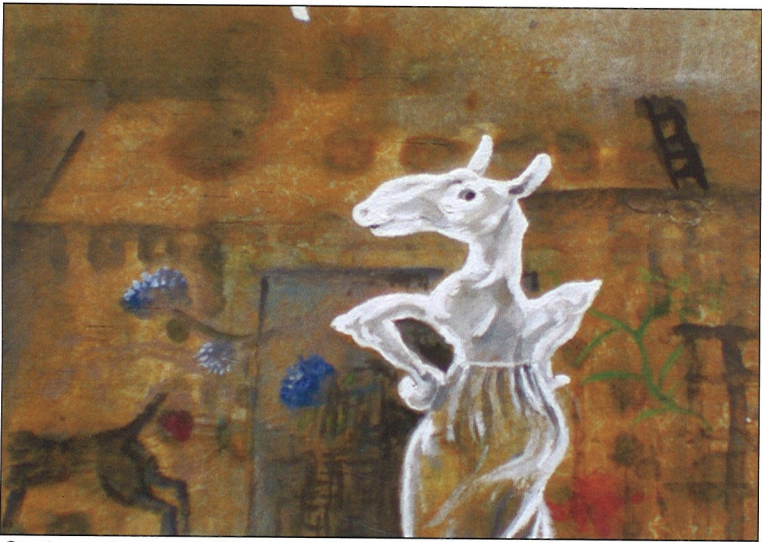
Martinez' 2016 work "Mystical Country Time (moment)" is a ruralist's dreamscape, especially one with visions of taking a trip aboard a rocket ship. Is that what the bird who's landed atop the barn is thinking, or would any means of escape do? Perhaps he's simply hoping the finger stops pointing at him.

If nothing else, "Chasing the Tale" is about storytelling, be it through a journey, one's circumstances, or through mythology. It's accessible art that in many ways strips away the remoteness and mystery of much of what frequently constitutes "art," and it sure is comforting to know that this is going on in our backyard.

Pay a visit to the gallery—this is the best way yet I've found to have fun at the airport. ☺

**"Chasing the Tale"**  
Albany Airport Gallery, Albany, NY  
Through February 26, 2018  
[www.albanyairport.com/art](http://www.albanyairport.com/art)





Gerda van Leeuwen, *Coyote series*, monprint, tempera on Japanese paper on canvas, 2014. Photo by Arthur Evans



Kenny Harris, *Imaginenagerie*, ink on paper, wire, 2017. Photo courtesy Albany International Airport



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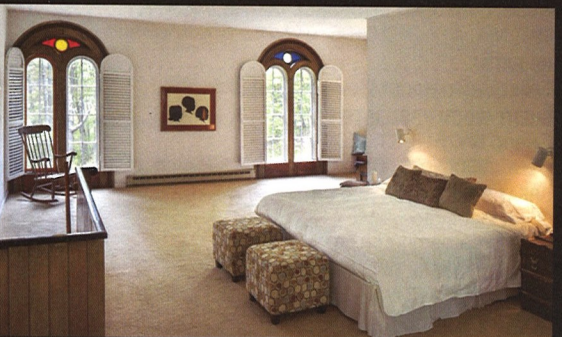
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