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- BUSINESS
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- TRAVEL
- CULTURE
- MEDIA REVIEWS
- EXTRAS
- LOCAL LATINAZO
- GAMING
- CALENDAR
- ORGANIZATIONS
- CLASSIFIEDS
- IN MENTIONABLES
- HOT OFF THE STREET
- RSS
- SNAPSHOTS

ART J. ARAM MOURADIAN October 11, 2006

# Locke's forbidden world revealed

**BOSTON ARTIST DISPLAYS BEAUTIFUL BUT EERIE PAINTINGS AT RHYS GALLERY IN THE SOUTH END THROUGH OCT. 29**

There is something unsettling about Steve Locke's art. His work is beautiful, but beyond the aesthetic value it has an eerie sense of sentience. This art knows it's on a wall, and that you are there watching it. If you gaze at the paintings, they will make contact. You might even experience vague internal reactions that signal an argument, a plea, a desire to hide, a desire to pursue, or even embarrassment. Your neurons will fire and you'll likely produce an extra wisp of pheromone. If you look, you will feel it in your gut.

I'm not talking about tears or rapture here. I simply mean activity. Locke's art responds to a world where physical contact between men is generally forbidden. The artist asks, "When did you stop holding your father's hand? What is it like to live in a world that keeps men apart?" The answer, according to the exhibit, is that men learn to connect visually.

Steve Locke attended Boston University and received his M.F.A. at Mass. College of Art where he currently teaches. Despite his classical training, Locke's casual approach to serious painting is apparent in his work. Draft lines are left exposed. Brush bristles, lint and at least one dead mosquito can be found dried into the surfaces. Rather than draw from the works, the small "imperfections" add to their attitude. The stray hair emerging from dried pigment announces in a clear tone, "This is pigment on wood and you're thinking about sex." •

*Steve Locke's paintings are on display through Oct. 29, at the RHYS gallery, 401 Harrison Avenue in Boston's South End.*



Steve Locke (photo: J. Aram Mouradian)



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- CLUB CALENDAR
- GOSSIP
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- PRINTER-FRIENDLY VERSION
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