

# ARTFORUM

## Trenton Doyle Hancock

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM

4202 East Fowler Avenue, CAM101

January 14–March 10

On display in this exhibition is a broad range of Trenton Doyle Hancock's recent output, from paintings and works on paper to site-specific installations and prints, all of which reveal an ongoing narrative about the mythic conflict between what the Texas-based artist calls "Mounds"—half-plant, half-animal creatures—and those who prey on them, "Vegans"—skeletal figures inhabiting a Boschian underworld.

A standout work is *Flower Bed II: A Prelude to Damnation*, 2008, screen-printed wallpaper in fluorescent inks that covers an entire wall in the exhibition. Created in collaboration with the Graphicstudio at the university, the piece depicts the biblical moment of original sin in Hancock's mythology: the murder of hundreds of baby Mounds by their half brother and half sister. The two killers are eventually banished to the underworld, where they begin to produce the race of Vegans. Also noteworthy are Hancock's mixed-media works on paper, which are hung salon style, a curatorial choice that highlights the artist's meticulous crosshatch drawing technique and his skillful use of shading to convey a nuanced sense of mass and volume. The latter is evident in works such as *Faster*, 2010, in which the artist presents himself with bulging and voluminous folds of fat.

For the first time, Hancock explicitly depicts himself in his pieces here, for instance in the work on paper *It Takes Two*, 2010. This self-portrait shows the artist whispering into the ear of his longtime alter ego, the superhero Torpedo Boy. Hancock's turn to self-portraiture blurs distinctions between self and other in his works, just as the increasingly hybrid figures the artist depicts in his recent pieces such as *Self Portrait with Tongue* and *Man Don't Work, Don't Eat*, both 2010, are not easily recognizable as either Vegans or Mounds. These new subjects depicted by Hancock suggest the permeability of corporeal borders, and they trouble the notion of separate and contained Vegan and Mound worlds and subjects. In this sense, the title of the exhibition, "We Done All We Could and None of It's Good," might not only imply the Sisyphean struggle of Mounds against Vegans but also signal the futility of maintaining a dichotomy between the two groups and worlds—as good and evil and as heaven and hell, respectively—in the first place.



View of "We Done All We Could and None of It's Good," 2011.

— Alpesh Kantilal Patel