



Eric Yahnker *DUBAI*, 2008 Colored pencil on paper 30 x 44 inches

UNTITLED

PAUL YOUNG

Perhaps the greatest difference between yesterday's artists and today's is their sense of humor. People laughed in the '70s and '80s, and they laughed a lot. Artist Lowell Darling ran for California governor on a campaign in which everyone would get Wednesdays off. Tom Marioni got a group of museum-goers drunk. Bob & Bob ate at expensive restaurants and "forgot" they were broke in a piece called "Oh Great, Now What?"

Stupid? Maybe. But laughter can be a crucial, life-giving force. You can see some of that in the '70s work at "California Video" at the Getty, and even more at MOCA's upcoming "Allan Kaprow: Art as Life," which is from the same period.

But you won't find a lot of it in too many shows at the moment, save for **Eric Yahnker** (at L.A.'s Lightbox, *kimlightgallery.com*). He doesn't perform, but he's worked for "Seinfeld" and "South Park," and he knows how to translate the absurd into drawings and sculptures. In one piece he transcribes every word from "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" with his foot; in another, he changes the size of Abraham Lincoln's features; and in another still, he deconstructs the name Fred Astaire until it reads "Fred-Ass-Stare." (You can't read it unless you lean over, with your rear in the air.) "People have said, 'I feel bad because it made me laugh,'" he says. "But how can you feel bad about that?"

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