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Richie Lasansky's "Menagerie" Debuts at Arsenal Gallery



Richie Lasansky, Bureaucratic Goat, 2008, pencil on paper, © Richie Lasansky

The Arsenal Gallery in Central Park is pleased to present Richie Lasansky's *Menagerie*, a collection of large-scale pencil drawings of zoo animals, which are re-imagined in a variety of whimsical, surreal and improbably wonderful ways. In Lasansky's work, a bear and human sit together in quiet contemplation, a goat wears a tie, and an ostrich gazes flirtatiously towards the viewer. The exhibit is on view until December 4, 2009.

"Richie Lasansky's Menagerie is a larger than life exhibition that gives humanlike qualities to wildlife found in many of the city's zoos," said Parks & Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe. "We are pleased to bring Mr. Lasansky's thoughtful work to the Gallery in the Arsenal, the very first home of the Central Park Menagerie in the 1860s. These elaborate pencil drawings will compel viewers to reconsider how we perceive and are perceived by these majestic creatures."

Displayed in the historic Arsenal, which housed the original Central Park Zoo, Lasansky's drawings in Menagerie are based on the artist's visits to the Bronx Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo, and Central Park Zoo. During his site visits, Lasansky collected raw material, which provided the foundation for his artistic imagination. Perhaps more than any visual art style, Lasansky is influenced by the Latin American literary tradition of "magic realism," exemplified in the writing of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Like the author, Lasansky presents the fantastic and improbable as factual.

"Art should be more poetic than literal," said Lasansky. "The lines in a drawing are important, but it's the tension and space between them that has the power to capture your imagination."

Lasansky has been drawing animals since he was a little boy in South America. He studied biology in college but returned to art during an eight-year printmaking apprenticeship under his grandfather, master printmaker Mauricio Lasansky. Lasansky was born in 1970 in La Paz, Bolivia. He has lived in Costa Rica, Maine, and Iowa. Currently he lives and works in New York City.

The Arsenal Gallery is dedicated to examining themes of nature, urban space, wildlife, New York City parks, and park history. It is located on the third floor of the NYC Parks & Recreation headquarters, in Central Park, on Fifth Avenue at 64th Street. Gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. except for holidays. Admission is free.

Since its inception in 1983, *The Daily Plant*, an agency newsletter produced each business day and distributed throughout the Emerald Empire, has detailed Parks events, programs, and accomplishments.