

Houston artist Jack Massing, known internationally as one of The Art Guys, will be featured this January at kind of a small array, 106 N. Main in Magdalena. This will be his first solo project in New Mexico. Opening Saturday, January 27, 6 to 8 PM, through February 24.

Massing employs found materials, humor, visual and linguistic puns, and a tendency to follow through on fugitive ideas that occur to him randomly and serendipitously.

Compression features video, assemblage, artist books, and a capillary beverage cup patented in 2016 to aid astronauts drinking liquids in zero gravity environments. The cup was invented by Texas and Oregon based NASA scientists Mark Weislogel, Donald Pettit, Andrew Wollman, and Ryan Jenson.

Mr. Massing will be in attendance at the show and may invite the curious to hear how he came to be gifted with a prototype of the cup after a meeting with Weislogel and Pettit, in which he offered a potential solution to the puzzle concerning a large fuel storage tank that will be in orbit around the moon.

The connecting concept of the show is “compression,” some of which is actual, as in *Oil Man*, a photo of a figure who appears to be a 1930s oil boss framed in gold, with bright red foam clown nose squashed between his face and the glass of the frame, suggesting that his talent for sniffing out riches has flattened out.

Massing’s one minute video, *Tired and Lazy*, features the image of a tire leaning against a tree in the foreground and a river in the background, from which the title is derived. Seemingly a one liner, by the end of the video the word-play collapses, leaving you to float gently down river in an inner tube of amused consideration of what you have just observed.



With *Arcane Rake (V. Putin)*, the playful pun-massing cascades and rewards exploration with satisfying associations. The piece is a garden rake with a blue and yellow Ukraine-themed handle and seven red clown noses attached to its tines. The color scheme is primary, but the simplicity is deceptive.

The rake isn't left lying on the ground by a careless gardener, but leans against the wall like a Duchampian pause or perhaps a nationalistic lapse of vision. The seven noses are a clear reference to the members of the G7, who in 2014 disinvented Russia's membership in the G8 for violating the sovereignty of Ukraine. The leaning rake also suggests an interval in a seven-note scale, as any number of clown noses or errant heads of state replicate a single abrasive tone heard round the world.



The sound-alike word pair, *arcane/Ukraine*, concealed in plain sight within the title/handle of the piece offers a clue, but move in too close to find what lies within and you may get a whack marking your forehead with an embarrassing bruise. It's not the mark of the beast, though given the surplus of so called "strong men" plaguing the world, it may as well be. Massing's optimistic outlook suggests that in the end, the resistance piling up world-wide will offer these hulking farceurs the comeuppance lying latent in their overstep.

The eponymous piece *William Freestone*, in antique frame, is a found carte de viste engraved Wm. Freestone, Barron, WI. Mr. Freestone, is trapped, obscured, and visually fractured under an over-scale glass diamond. Diamonds themselves are freestones, which escape their fate as carbon trapped in the earth's mantle one hundred miles below the surface through a process facilitated by millions of years of heat and compression.

Two recently published books, Massing's *THANKS A MILLION* and a collaboration with William Wegman, *Two Clever By Half*, will be available for purchase and signing by the artist.



Massing most recently visited New Mexico in September/October 2023 as a participant in the Alive Festival in Truth or Consequences, a two-day, multi-media extravaganza conjured by many to celebrate the seventy-fifth birthday of renowned artist and Eagle Scout, Max Rada Dada.

kind of a small array is supported by a New Mexico Creative Industries Grant.
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