



Review: Justin Cooper's Board

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The collision of improv comedy with contemporary art would make an excellent exhibition—and if it happened, it would surely include the artwork of Justin Cooper. Cooper now lives in New York but returns to Chicago every now and then to stage an exhibition or performance. For his third solo exhibit at Monique Meloche Gallery, Cooper presents a handful of drawings and one enormous sculpture. They are all standard Cooper schtick, which is to say they are delightfully kooky. Like shaggy-dog jokes, Cooper's art objects don't have a punch line, and so they don't get stale.

The non sequitur is Cooper's signature move. More than just a recent trend in advertising tactics, the non sequitur has a long, bouncy history in the life of modern and contemporary art. The surrealists, for example, produced obnoxiously beautiful pairings of paradoxes, opening doors to the psyche's cesspool. Cooper's work knocks on those same doors.

Cooper's drawings in *Board* are some of his best yet. Over five-feet high and four-feet wide, they are filled with squiggly, colorful, abstract imagery. They are video game labyrinths, waltzes for mitochondria, cave drawings from the clown age, maps to the ticklish spot. Cooper lures the mystery out of the most mundane things, from garden hoses to trash bags, making each domestic item a character in the tragicomedy of life.

Board runs through December 29 at Monique Meloche Gallery (2154 W Division St.).