

# Interview

## RAISE THE BAR: DAVE MULLER AT THE MANDRAKE



PHOTO BY JOSHUA WHITE

During summers, Los Angeles-based artist Dave Muller spends his time in Glover, Vermont, where he is part of the Bread & Puppet theatre troupe, a venue with a cult following known for "cheap art and political theater." There, he plays trumpet and sousaphone, and draws between practices. Today, at the famed artist-owned Mandrake bar in Culver City, Muller is working on a new mural inspired by his "pastoral" drawings from the past summers. In the back portion of the bar, (a gallery/dance floor) Muller has set up his "studio": paints, brushes, books, a jug of water and a coffee pot occupy a table. To say that

the artist is into music is an understatement: a terabyte of songs shuffle from his computer, not to mention his "Top Ten" beloved record paintings. He has spent the last eight days (thus far, and he predicts another five to finish) making a "love note to his community."

Muller has painted an environment with two green grass scenes, one right side up, the other upside down, a systematic scribble of a bee's journey and a fallen disco ball. "I wanted to consider what intoxication does to you—it loosens you up, helps you to see reality differently," he says of his choice to make the grass reflective. There are two columns in front of the mural, which Dave has decided to "incorporate, just because it seems that most people like to ignore them." He has painted wrapped caution tape around them inspired by similar ones at the 1980s Hacienda club of Factory Records (that released the likes of Joy Division and New Order, and a favorite of Muller's). Above, is a scene of various round objects reminiscent of a treasure-filled attic.

Last year, Muller was commissioned to make a large-scale mural for the 100,000-seat Dallas Cowboys stadium. This is a far more intimate endeavor: "My approach to this project is to create something that I would like to live with *in my own house*. I *do* plan on seeing it a lot—The Mandrake is my favorite bar; the only bar I really frequent in LA." He's been known to DJ here, and now he gets to spend evenings hanging out, drinking and eating in between painting. The mural is a wallpaper like décor: "Just like an iceberg: there's something nice to look at on the surface, and then a lot to consider under the surface." Asked how he hopes people react to his ecosystem, he paraphrases Ian Curtis: "I make things for myself. Hopefully other people like them too."

*A PARTY FOR THE UNVEILING IS SCHEDULES FOR DECEMBER 18. THE MANDRAKE IS LOCATED AT 2692 S. LA CIENEGA BLVD, LOS ANGELES.*

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