



'rak'rūm (noun);  
the back room of an art gallery  
where artists and art lovers hang

## Ed Fornieles



Ed Fornieles,  
*Workland: the fence is a narrow place*,  
2015, Installation view  
© Courtesy of Château Shatto. Photo: Elon Schoenholz

Ed Fornieles (for-nee-el-es) (b. 1983, UK) is an English artist working in Los Angeles using a variety of different media including the Internet, sculpture, performance, film and social media. Fornieles merges sophisticated social manipulation with a formal approach to the Internet and pop culture. His works *Animal House*, *Dorm Daze* and *The Dreamy Awards* have drawn comparisons to Todd Phillips, e...[more]



### Ed Fornieles: Postcapitalism, Networks, and Tenderness

Since 2010, when I first met Ed Fornieles, I've watched the artist somewhat like a private eye sitting in a greasy spoon cafe with eye holes cut out of a newspaper—at a safe hermetic distance. I went to my first ever performance night in London that he had curated at Paradise Row, and watched a man pour cornflakes and milk all over the floor. I read all the online tabloid furore over his debauched *Animal House* project and his former relationship with a British film star.

From afar, he often seems to be part of that *bright-young-next-big-thing* group which is often an irksome identity to shake off. He certainly has followed an established route so far: moving from underground galleries in London to bigger, commercial spaces internationally (he's a regular at Frieze, and has had solo shows with Chisenhale Gallery and Carlos/Ishikawa in London and now Château Shatto in Los Angeles) and institutes (including the Barbican and MoCA). I don't have enough insight to know what his position is or will be in the art world, but irrespective, Ed's **giant, sprawling, installations** have so much emotion and sensitivity in them; they possess a Spinoza-like impulse to understand the world and be free—perhaps even to the extent of coming off as over-thought, of having too *much* time to roam with the imagination that they can end up being hard to understand themselves. Still I find that his installations are far from faddish. He's still carefully developing the ideas about art and the world that I noticed when I visited one of his early exhibits (still very wet behind the ears) that filled up three floors of a tiny house in central London.

He's an ambidextrous artist—trained at the Ruskin in Fine Art and in Sculpture at the Royal College, and former assistant to Anish Kapoor—who seems to be capable of handling pretty much any media, traditional or new, and he uses all of it to build his fantasy ecosystems, networked landscapes that depending on how you look at them portray postcapitalist optimism or the insecurity of internet insanity.

His current solo show (at the gargantuan Château Shatto space in downtown LA) *Workland: the fence is a narrow place*, has been extended to November 14.



Ed Fornieles, Char Jansen, and Sam Williams in Soho, 2010. Photo: Stuart Kay

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**Char Jansen:** I'm always happy to have an opportunity to talk to you to see how work is going as you were **the first artist I ever wrote about** (see awkward picture above).

It's really cool to see how your work has maintained the same interests, but has developed so much since then. Could you describe how you think your work is growing?

**Ed Fornieles:** I get very anxious about this. Yes I can see these threads that run through the work, these obsessions that I can't seem to shake. I've tried to de-couple myself a few times, only to find them in the work at the end of the day. But a fetish is a powerful thing and greatly enjoyable once it's been recognized, come to terms with and embraced.

**CJ:** Yes! I feel like in a nutshell that's the reason to create any kind of art.

How long have you been in LA now? Do you like living there? What's your favorite thing to do there?

**EF:** Nearly three years now, but it's an on/off affair. I want to move around as much as possible while circumstance permits. I've realized that my position is closer to upper management than the model of a traditional artist and there are certain freedoms attached to that.

LA is the city most like the internet. As long as you know the address everything is possible and most things can be acquired. In that way it takes a while to connect with enough people to live in a genuinely interesting ecosystem. But my top suggestions would include the 24/7 Korean Spas, Deep Creek Hot Springs, cryotherapy and the restaurant Pho87.



*Workland: the fence is a narrow place, 2015, Installation view. Courtesy of Château Shatto. Photo: Elon Schoenholz*

**CJ:** Since the first work of yours I saw in Soho, you always seem to be making alternative worlds, rather than creating individual artworks. To me they seem to be utopias. Are you romantic?

**EF:** I definitely don't see them as utopias, they are troubled imperfect worlds, absorbing everything around them and then bleeding back out. Each project and especially the performances have a sense of chaos magic built into it, where things are set up and play themselves out without my control. After that point the studio becomes an autopsy point, where I am tasked with making sense of what has just unfolded.

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Ed Fornieles, *Our Brand is Crisis*, 2015, Digital print, acetate, polished aluminum, 63.75 x 48 x .5 inches. Courtesy of Château Shatto. Photo: Elon Schoenholz

**CJ: Maybe my kind of utopia is twisted—a kind of place where imperfections and improbable situations can just be.**

**Your current exhibition at Château Shatto seems to have a political stake, though. To me it seems to build very post-capitalist (but maybe that's because I'm obsessed with the idea myself of creating an alternative ecosystem...).**

**EF:** I think throughout all the work there has been this idea of modeling alternatives futures, and coming up with strategies that mirror, distort, and have some sort of utility. The base of the exhibition was constructed out of conversations with the two other artists in the show, Matt Goerzen and Hannah Black, which was necessarily rambling, covering a lot of territory very fast around the subjects of labor and the knowledge worker. As the show has unfolded it has become more focused, picking out certain threads by working with the co-workers in the space, mapping out an ecosystem that allows for the production of work by both them and us.

For me the project was born out of a personal obsession with work and value creation, which I see in myself, and a lot of people around me. Maybe it comes from this protestant idea of redemption through work. It's a relationship with the world that demands value out of everything; everything is viewed in relation to its contribution to a way of life whose tone can be either nurturing or destructive depending on how you construct it.

**CJ: It's an enormous space... How much did that affect your thinking and planning?**

**EF:** Space is bigger in LA and it ends up affecting the scale you think on. The whole show took around three months to put together. It's hard, it's one of those shows that came to me in a moment and then was a logistical task of implementing and building a framework. That was just a starting point or means to a different type of production.



*Workland: the fence is a narrow place, 2015, Installation view. Courtesy of Château Shatto. Photo: Elon Schoenholz*

**CJ: There's also this very strong playfulness in your work and it seems again in the current exhibition... It's looks like an adult crèche, but I don't mean to say that means it's "accessible" in its presentation, at all. What kind of engagement do you hope for the audience to have? Do you anticipate what will happen when people enter the space?**

**EF:** This is a different sort of engagement—it's softer—where the engagement of participants is fundamentally different as they become the subjects. They're at the center: they are both subjects and stars, both shaping the work produced and being shaped by it.



Ed Fornieles, *Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials*, 2015, Digital print, polished aluminum frame, plywood backing and cleat 66 x 45 x 1.5 inches.

Courtesy of Château Shatto. Photo: Elon Schoenholz

**CJ: Who's this cartoon character you use on your [Instagram](#), who also appears in some iteration in the *Workland* show?**

**EF:** That's me, it's just me. To me it feels like an evolution of my image, shaped by the pressures and stresses of the environment it exists in. I personally find the selfie moment awkward. The cartoon form allows me to express myself freely, in a both a personal sense and a wider sense.

**CJ: Very cute. So what's coming up for you after the Château Shatto show?**

**EF:** I want to produce something tender, that is radically different from how I've approached work to this point, whose pace, texture, and tempo are slower. This will probably manifest itself in a film—but a film that is constantly throwing material into that world. We'll see.

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—Char Jansen

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