



December 2004

The Big Picture: Lea Rekow

Words: Adrienne Day

Photo: Jennifer Brommer

A quirky Tribeca storefront boasts the name Gigantic Art Space, though there's not much that's gigantic, or even moderately oversized, about the one-year-old multimedia art space. That is, until you factor in the larger-than-life story of its gallerist, Lea Rekow. "I've always been a traveler, and lived in so many different countries and cultures," says the 38-year-old Australian artist and curator. "I've always worked under plural identities, and I feel the gallery is a natural expression of that." Rekow's exhibitions focus on themes such as globalization and personal space -- including the recent show Giganticism -- and have featured everything from a "toxin-sniffing" robot dog to a laminating machine for Bugles corn snacks.

Overall, a comforting sense of unwieldy inclusion prevails. "I don't want to set something up and then fill my expectations by trying to find work that fits my idea," she explains. "To me, that's like taking a package holiday." But the gallery is a for-profit venture, and funded privately by a larger company that includes Gigantic Pictures and Gigantic Music. "By working through multidisciplinary work, I can rearticulate artistic expression in a commercial way," she says. Rekow ran away from home at the age of 13, earning a living as a mixed-media painter before giving it up in lieu of "literally setting out to see the world." She recalls, "I started to make experimental ethnographies using Super 8 film, operating my camera as if it were a diary" -- collecting visual fragments of time spent trekking in Nepal and documenting human rights atrocities in Burma. Eventually she found a home in New York City -- "the only place that hasn't bored me." Working first as an executive at Viacom and then running a recording studio before signing on to GAS, Rekow thrives on change. "Pretty much everything I do is a new start for me," she laughs. "But life is complex and full of uncertainty. There's no one correct way of doing anything, so all I can do is take my own approach."