

ARTSY



David Lynch, My Girlfriend Had Red Hair, Kayne Griffin Corcoran

David Lynch Continues to Haunt American Culture, Onscreen and On Canvas

—Maxwell Williams

Everyone knows that from 1977 to 2006, [David Lynch](#) was responsible for many of the oddest, most imaginative movies and television series in American entertainment history: *Eraserhead*, *Twin Peaks*, *Blue Velvet*, *Mulholland Drive*, *Elephant Man*—the list goes on. According to [a recent New York Times article](#) about Lynch's paintings, artists like [Cindy Sherman](#) and [Gregory Crewdson](#) count his films as inspiration in their own work. What most don't know is that he got into filmmaking through the idea that he could make a "moving painting," as he told *Art+Auction Magazine* in 2013. In fact, Lynch studied painting at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (PAFA) in the '60s, and his work is currently on view there in *David Lynch: The Unified Field* through January 11, 2015.

Lynch is certainly an impressive painter. He has painted consistently through his career, and has, somewhat surreptitiously, staged nearly 30 solo shows at places like Leo Castelli Gallery, the Tokyo Museum of Contemporary Art, [Tilton Gallery](#), and the Max Ernst Museum in Bruhl, Germany. I had the pleasure of seeing Lynch's 2013 show, "[Naming/New Works](#)," at [Kayne Griffin Corcoran's](#) mid-city gallery in Los Angeles. In that

show, the large paintings ranged from morbid (a plane about to collide with a tower) to irreverent (a laughing zebra and an abstracted female figure, with the words “My girlfriend had red hair”) to mundane (a truck carrying a log on a cloudy day). It’s very easy to see the connection between Lynch’s paintings and his filmmaking; confounding narratives and a black sense of humor drive both practices in a similar way.



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Through his films, Lynch’s aesthetics and style have become deeply pervasive throughout American popular culture, so it is inherently difficult to separate Lynch the Filmmaker (the term “Lynchian” may now have superseded “Kafka-esque” to describe absurdist situations) and Lynch the Painter. But it’s important to remember that his paintings aren’t just a passing fad—latecomer painters like James Franco or Bob Dylan come to mind—but an integral part of his artistic vision. Lynch is a trained painter and has continued to paint through his entire career. The evidence is in the PAFA show, which features 90 paintings and drawings that Lynch made from 1965 through the present day.

It was recently announced, to rejoicing fans, that Lynch has been working on new episodes of the massively popular TV show *Twin Peaks*, which will mark his first work in moving images in nearly a decade. Perhaps working on the show will feed further explorations into painting, or maybe they are independent entities for Lynch, and he’d be painting no matter what. What is certain is that regardless of the medium, Lynch will always be creating works that haunt and provoke.