

HOUSTON

Art News: Whir of Words!

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Frankfort's "LIKE", photography by Eric Hester

As it turns out, growing up in H-Town was quite inspiring for young Dana Frankfort, a child of the '80s who's now an in-demand Boston-based artist with both a show here at Inman Gallery and the debut of a major installation at Rice in the coming weeks. "There was a store in Meyerland Shopping Center called Gifts 'n' Gab," recalls Frankfort, now 41. "They sold lucite boxes and you could get your name painted on them. I thought the bright colors and flat text were brilliant."

Those early interactions with the era's bold aesthetic left an impression. Text is often what you first notice looking at Frankfort's colorful abstract-leaning paintings—but it's obscured, having been

layered over with textures of paint. The work calls to mind billboards washed with graffiti, against the horizon, another inspiration for the artist. "I think my work references the landscape," she says. "I often put text into the work, but I don't think of myself as a text painter; the text is not overly relevant."

Frankfort didn't seriously get into art until her junior year at Brandeis, after which she received an MFA in painting and printmaking from Yale. Then she moved back home for a two-year residency in the Glassell School's prestigious Core program. Restless, she left after a year, ready to move to New York, where she lived for 11 years. "The Core program is amazing," says Frankfort, "but I felt like I'd been in some kind of program for too long. I wanted to be out in the real world. That's where my paintings come from. ... Walking out my door every morning [in New York City], I was inundated with visual stuff."

In keeping with her affinity for the real world, the "stuff" that inspires her is humble. "I keep things like a candy wrapper that has a certain typeface [or] color pattern in my studio, and there's a phone book whose cover I like. Nail polish has also been an inspiration."

Frankfort's solo show at Inman (3901 Main St., 713.526.7800), FOR THE BIRDS, which runs Sept. 7 to Oct. 27, was actually inspired by grander things, she admits. The pieces were made during a residency at the famous Yaddo artist community in Saratoga Springs, N.Y. "There was a whole wall of floor-to-ceiling windows that looked out on huge, rolling fields and trees and water," she says of Yaddo. "It was such a rare opportunity."

Meanwhile, Frankfort had to think outside the box to make the 14-by-9-foot painting—called "THINK"—that by Sept. 15 will be on view at Rice's BioScience Research Collaborative building. "I was freaking out for a while at the size," she says, only hinting at specific details of the piece. "But it allowed me to reinvent the way I make a painting." For this hometown girl bounding into the world's art scene, clearly big things are in store.