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Welcome to His Nightmare

BY CAROL LEE // PHOTOGRAPHED BY PATTERSON BECKWITH

Artist Daniel McDonald Takes on the Whitney Biennial.



These days, artist and jewelry designer Daniel McDonald is a ball of nerves. He's so busy he hardly has any time to sleep. Since moving to New York over 20 years ago to attend Cooper Union, McDonald is finally having his well-deserved big league moment.

The 38-year-old artist -- known for his satirical dioramas made of monster dolls that exude a deadpan Twilight Zone vibe; Mended Veil, a jewelry line that mixes New Age spaciness with vending-machine charm; and his alter ego, the hunchbacked granny Mindy Vale -- was nominated for best new artist at the Guggenheim Museum's First Annual Art Awards last year, and he was recently chosen to be part of the 2010 Whitney Biennial. He also has a solo show coming up this month at Broadway 1602 Gallery. "You know, I didn't realize that there are all these ancillary things you have to do for the Biennial," says McDonald with a tinge of "WTF" and glee in his voice. "Tonight I have to go this Young Collectors meeting and then record for the acousti-guide. I want to use the voice of Vincent Price, but I don't know... I hope I'm not too nervous to do it."

McDonald may sound self-deprecating, but it's clear that he'll be just fine. Indeed, he is no stranger to the limelight. As a teenager living in the L.A. suburb of Temple City, he was already a bona fide art star: In high school, he received a Presidential Scholars in the Arts award and made a trip to the White House with his mom to accept it from Bush Sr. No big deal. "I was already a jaded art hag even before I got to college."

The 2010 Whitney Biennial opens February 25th; "Lost Believes" opens February 27th at Broadway 1602.

Artists! Live!

After checking out their art, check out the artists themselves. Throughout the run of the Whitney Biennial, a slew of participating artists will be staging performances and happenings on Friday nights in the museum's lobby and lower galleries. We're looking forward to an evening of voguing courtesy of Rashaad Newsome; Ari Marcopoulos's "night of noise" (above); an exploration of the minutia of living by Aki Sasamoto and Culture Push; and a performance of music, theater, poetry and audience participation from Martin Kersels. This story was published on February 25, 2010.