

ORLANDO WEEKLY

GALLERY

Enticing expressions of approval

Artist Lorraine Lax unveils new mix of emotions

By Theresa Everline

Artist Lorraine Lax seems intent on trying to tie things together. Take, for example, her series of mixed-media works that will be on display at Dexter's of Winter Park beginning May 6. "I'm trying to combine painting, drawing, poetry and found objects," she explains while sitting in her Maitland studio contemplating the not-quite-finished paintings.

The show, *Please Love My Art*, which takes its title from one of the pieces, uses images of sculptures from the Louvre and Rodin's Garden and incorporates them into paintings that depict a kind of emotional terrain. The heads from the classical sculptures are the starting points for ersatz warriors or angels, using earthy olive, coral and slate-blue tones. The paint drips to the bottom of the canvas, and the drawing is deliberately uneven and unpolished, so that the time-worn expressions on the sculptures contrast with the immediacy and eager simplicity of the work as a whole. Lax then attaches an object - usually an old piece of jewelry - and writes sayings on the canvas in a childlike script, phrases like "Humility saves my soul," "I am a warrior" and "Without fear riding my wings."

"These are personal statements, but I want them to be universal," says Lax.

The creative director of d'lor, a graphic-design and public-relations firm for commercial real estate and architects, the 50-ish Lax has worked for ad agencies, film production companies and commercial photographers. With short, dark, wavy hair and heavy-framed round glasses, Lax comes across as

both self-effacing and savvy in the way that the title *Please Love My Art* would suggest. (For example, she demurs at giving her age, explaining in an e-mail, "Age is never in a woman's favor as an artist, or in any way, unless she's young.") She directed the team that created a series of streamlined, black-and-white images for the Eo Inn, developer Phil Rampy's boutique hotel on Lake

Eola Park. For her work, "Design is always integrated with fine art," she says, again aiming to pull together separate realms.

Lax, who studied with painter David Salle at an Atlantic Center for the Arts residency, traces the *Please Love My Art* series to an experience she had when showing her work in Paris and the south of France in 1996. It was not a good experience, to say the least, involving art dealers of questionable character, a sudden, grave illness in the family, and Lax sneaking her own work out of a gallery. Afterwards, she was "broken-hearted"; she admits to thinking at the time, "Maybe I shouldn't paint. Maybe this is a mess."

What she did was retreat into her artwork, painting in solitude. "This show picks up from where my Paris trip left off," she explains. "It reflects images I took in that city and pain from a time that was to bring so much joy."

Lax notes that she has been taking photographs for 30 years; when she lived in New York, for example, she was drawn

to photographing mannequins and graffiti, a combination that seems like a counterpart to the sculpture and sayings of the *Please Love My Art* series. "I have a vast collection of images," she explains. "I want to use that artwork, which has been in the closet. I found a way to bring that out of

the closet," she says with a smile.

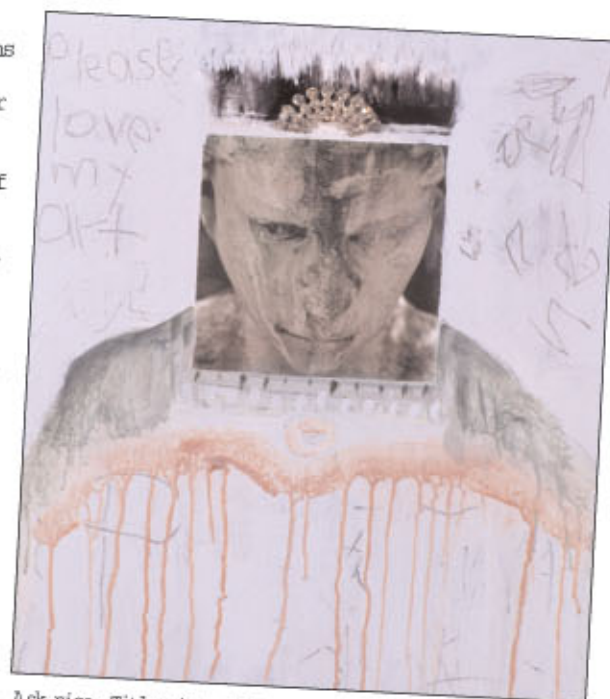
With the earnest phrases that are written on the paintings, she's also trying to bring out core emotional realities. When Lax talks about the meanings of

WHAT: *Please Love My Art*, paintings by Lorraine Lax

WHERE: Dexter's of Winter Park

WHEN: May 6-31

COST: Free; (407) 629-1150



Ask nice: Title piece of Lax's *Please Love My Art* series

the pieces, she refers to the struggles we all experience, big and small: feeling ashamed, wanting success, fighting fear. Lax gets strength from the expression of these ideas, but she also finds power and delight in the act of painting.

"Every day I'm not doing it," she says of her artwork, "is taking some joy out of my life." ♦