

# ARTNEWS

Russeth, Andrew. "Scott Reeder: Moonstruck." *Art News*. 06 February 2015.



After eleven years, the painter [Scott Reeder](#) has finally finished his first feature film, *Moon Dust* (2014), and recently screened it in New York City. "David Lynch's first film, *Eraserhead*, took about seven or eight years, so I kept thinking, 'I'm right on track!'" Reeder said over beers in Manhattan's East Village. "It was kind of like building a cathedral out of matchsticks—I worked on it when I had the chance," in between shows of his art, "when I had extra time or money."

The film is set on the moon, "in a resort that has seen better days, like Coney Island," Reeder said. It's a "retro, mid-century, '50s kind of idea of the future." Which is to say that it's filled with boxy, rather flimsy-looking architecture and furniture painted in shades that are reminiscent of the artist's paintings, whole sections of the building covered with hazy pink, lilac, or bright yellow.

The colors correspond to different classes of workers, just as employees are classified at Google and Disney World. "For some reason the lowest-class color is this salmon color—they're doing all the manual labor," said Reeder, who is 44, based in Detroit, and teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Is there a plot? Yes and no. “It’s a little bit more narrative than most art films, but then it’s pretty artsy for—” Reeder cut himself off. “It’s not a Hollywood movie.”

Definitely not. The film meanders through various sections of the vacation spot. There’s a spaced-out rock concert, an uproarious guest appearance from musician Ian Svenonius (of the hardcore band Nation of Ulysses) as the resort announcer, and Reeder himself plays the base manager with a penchant for exotic drugs. Eventually, all hell breaks loose.

The same could almost be said of the film’s production, which kept going and going, with Reeder shooting some 80 hours of footage in total. (Using amateurs—friends and acquaintances—required quite a few takes.) Eventually artist Laura Owens, bookseller Wendy Yao, and the art dealer Gavin Brown, who all knew about the film, got together and offered Reeder use of the sprawling 356 Mission Street space that they run together in Los Angeles. “They were all just like, ‘Just fucking finish it! We’ve got all this space,’” he said.

He built out large sets for the first time. The pressure was on. “It escalated into this bigger thing,” he said. “It got a lot more ambitious. Once I had the space, I just went nuts. Now I can see how people do stuff in Hollywood where people are like, ‘We built this thing! Why did we do that again? Who was in charge of this?’ Shit like, ‘Do we have a scene for this?’ There’s just this madness.”

The movie also began spilling over into his painting practice. “I started making—I call them, sort of unofficially, ‘Landlord Paintings,’ because they’re made with a roller. It came out of painting and repainting the sets. There’d be these moments where we’d have an intern helping me paint, and they didn’t know how to paint a wall and it would be like three different colors, and it would look like a Clyfford Still”—a look he channels in those new works.

For his next project he’s returning to painting, planning a two-person show with Andrew Kuo, which opens this month at Marlborough Chelsea and Marlborough Broome Street. Details were still sketchy when I spoke with Reeder, but it will include a performance program modeled on Club Nutz, the comedy club Reeder once helped run in Milwaukee. He’s also mulling a *Moon Dust* companion piece, a cut of the film using some of that old footage that could screen concurrently, showing what is happening elsewhere on the resort. “Not that I want to spend another eleven years fucking around with B-Side of the Moon,” he said, “but I think because it’s all fresh in my mind, and all the material I’ve gone through recently, I think I could actually do it pretty quickly.”

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