

STUART DUNKEL

Chuckie's Grand Adventure

By Meg Daly

A small white mouse goes on an international trip in this entertaining new show by Stuart Dunkel. Chuckie is the moniker of a mighty little mouse who gets up to all kinds of antics. *Chuckie's Grand Adventure* features 50-plus paintings and is on display at Rehs Contemporary November 10 through December 8, with a special opening reception on Thursday, November 9, from 4:30 to 8 p.m.

"Chuckie the mouse has become a cherished companion to me," Dunkel says. "I am thrilled to share his whimsical adventures with the world through this exhibition."

Based in Boston, Dunkel is a life-long artist and musician. He spent many years performing in ensembles such as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic. In 1994, he turned to painting full-time. He honed his skills at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Academy of Realist Art in Seattle. He is the author of *An Artist's Life: Insights into the Paintings of Stuart Dunkel*.

Dunkel is known for his humorous compositions and mischievous sense of humor. In *Saving Pisa*, Chuckie visits Italy and valiantly tries to push the famous leaning tower back to vertical. Chuckie's Mediterranean adventures also take him to Greece, where he endeavors to push a blueberry up an impossibly steep hill. Titled simply, *Sisyphus*, the painting elicits a grin. But it's also poignant—a diminutive portrait of grit and determination against impossible odds.

Chuckie is a malleable fellow, sometimes appearing to be mouse-size, other times huge, and sometimes tiny. Through Chuckie, Dunkel explores a range of human emotions, from the outsized to minute. Dunkel has said that Chuckie serves as an expression of a variety of the artist's emotions, from fear to joy, sadness and curiosity.

In *Arctic Cousins*, Chuckie goes up north to visit his distant penguin kin. He has shrunk in size so that he fits under the



1 *Saving Pisa*, oil on panel, 8 x 6"

2 *Ferry*, oil on canvas mounted on board, 10 x 20"

3 *Arctic Cousins*, oil on canvasboard, 16 x 20"

4 *Sisyphus*, oil on panel, 12 x 6"



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wing of a felted penguin ornament. He appears to be engaged in conversation with a small plastic toy penguin. What might they be chatting about? "Damn, Cuz, this ice is cold on the wee toes!"

Then, in *Ferry*, Chuckie appears on a normal scale as he hitches a ride across a body of water on the back of a turtle. This painting explains one of Chuckie's modes of transport during his adventure. Another method of

travel is gloriously portrayed in *Trip to Italy*, in which Chuckie can be seen in the basket of a colorful hot air balloon.

Dunkel delights in creating imaginative scenes like these. "I believe in the power of art to transport us to a place of pure joy and wonder," he says. ●

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