



## Mark Flood

by Catherine D. Ansporn August 2004

It's Volume Two in the life and legend of Mark Flood. The first book is well known to everyone who was on the Houston art scene in the late 1980s and early 1990s: Mark Flood, agent provocateur and enfant terrible — a painter and a prankster, who nonetheless was more than a clown, despite his outrageous activities and over-the-top antics. At the heart of it all, Flood is known for his fierce intelligence, wry wit, and undeniable talent, as well as his unerring ability to seamlessly migrate between the worlds of visual art and music, often using tri-identities.

And Flood has performed multiple roles — as gallerist, curator and artist — including the 1997 [GALA Committee](#) collaboration with Mel Chin and other artists called *In the Name of the Place*, which involved placing artist-made “props” on the 1990s TV series *Melrose Place*. This brilliant project (our favorite prop was the mailman's bag with a hanging pouch in the shape of a clip for an automatic weapon) was seen by millions of at-home viewers before it was presented at Los Angeles' Museum of Contemporary Art.

Flood attended Rice University, and he's represented in the permanent collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston by a slightly subversive take on art and commerce: the 1989-91 canvas *Museum Piece*, which portrays a screen-printed sign emblazoned with the repeated text “Your Ad Here,” while giving Flood's phone number.

His career encompasses solo and group shows at venues including the Menil Collection, the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, *DiverseWorks* and a project space in Marfa organized by Rob Weiner, director of the Chinati Foundation. The latter exhibit involved Flood's Thrift Store paintings, the series with which he was most identified in the late 1990s.

So who would ever have associated the persona of the macho, rough-around-the edges, testosterone-fueled Flood with grandma's lace hankies and tablecloths, napkins and shawls? Following their debut at San Antonio's Sala Diaz in 2001, Flood's series of lace paintings took off. Indeed, his exhibit this spring at American Fine Arts in Chelsea received rave notices in *Artforum* and *The New Yorker*.

In the 1990s, no one would have identified the concept of beauty and the sublime with Mark Flood — and now the artist has the art world at his doorstep for his canvases created by utilizing intricate, exquisite textiles and tablecloths. We keep searching for the irony here, but at the end, it would appear that Flood is earnest and obsessed in his quest for the next great painting. And for the critics and pundits, lace comes loaded with meaning, sparking an art smart dialogue that can exist apart from the formal properties of these beguiling, vigorously-hued paintings, which possess an almost-antique perfection despite - or perhaps because of — their tatters and tears. *-Special thanks to Mark Flood and David Hannah.*

