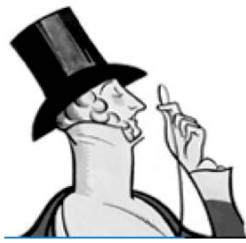


Louis B.  
James



# THE NEW YORKER

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN: ART

**MARTIN ROTH**

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Recently, the Energizer Bunny of art critics, Jerry Saltz, asked if the gallery exhibition is dead, doomed to extinction by global art fairs, auction houses, and online marketeering. This young artist's solo début opened before the article ran, but it feels like a retort nonetheless. A bonsai elm sprouts from a pedestal, accompanied by an audio track of chirps, warbles, and water. It's landscape as Conceptualist haiku, with shades of John Cage; it's also a Lilliputian reboot of Joseph Beuys's social sculpture of oak trees. Walk downstairs and discover the source of the sounds: crickets, frogs, lizards, and fish in terrariums and aquariums, and songbirds on branches in cages. The gallery show is alive! Through April 14.

Through April 13

**JAMES**

143B Orchard St., New York, NY  
212-533-4670

# EMERGING: Grass Grows and Fish Swim in Martin Roth's Natural Interventions



Courtesy the Artist

Martin Roth with his "untitled (persian rugs)" (2012) installation

Born in the Austrian countryside in 1977, Roth moved to New York at 19, and eventually graduated with an MFA from **Hunter College** last December. He now keeps a studio in Long Island City “full of plants, and birds are flying around it,” as he told ARTINFO. During a 2010 open studio event, he raised baby ducklings to allegorically explore how in his studio he “nurtures good ideas until they become art works” (and how at an open studio event he “often felt like an animal in the zoo”). However, he sees his real studio as the parks of New York, especially the Olmsted & Vaux-designed **Central Park**, which he states is “like walking in an image of nature.”

This state of in-between is central to his Persian rugs on which grass grows “on the ‘dust of history.’” They were inspired by philosopher **Michel Foucault**’s examination of “heterotopias,” spaces that both exist and do not exist. Since the designs of carpets were first patterned after gardens, Foucault

wrote that “the garden is a rug onto which the whole world comes to enact its symbolic perfection, and the rug is a sort of garden that can move across space.” Roth’s mobile rug installation has traveled to New York, Mexico, and a medieval castle in Graz, Austria for a May 2012 solo exhibition with **Reinisch Contemporary**. For that show, entitled “Second Nature,” Roth also flooded the floor of Reinisch’s gallery space and released 30 fish to swim through the water while life went on as normal around them. (Roth did say that he bought the gallery attendants rain boots.)

Roth is continuing to cross these boundaries between art and nature with a March 2013 solo exhibition at **Louis B. James** in New York’s Lower East Side, where he exhibited the Persian rug works in March 2012. For the upcoming show, he plans to focus on natural sounds, which he previously explored by releasing flies and crickets to alter the ambient soundscape. Currently, he is part of the **Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow**’s “Billboard International” in Poland. All of his work has an appealing chaos to it — each project’s actual life of its own can flourish into unexpected moments of natural intervention.

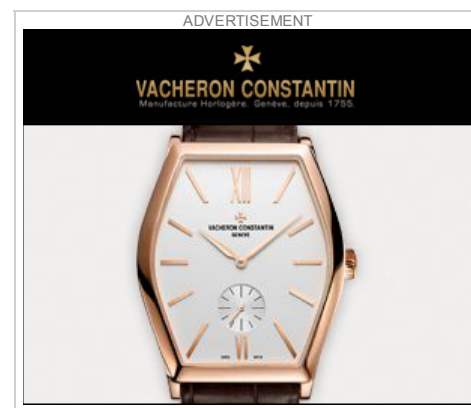
[\*\*Click here for a slideshow of Martin Roth’s art.\*\*](#)

by Allison Meier

Published: November 15, 2012

*EMERGING is a regular column where ARTINFO spotlights an up-and-coming artist.*

**Martin Roth** is as much caretaker as creator for his art, in which tufts of grass grow along the labyrinthine patterns of Persian rugs and his studio is transformed into an aviary for finches complete with trees for perching, all viewable through a peephole in the door. His installations and renegade interventions, like releasing a goldfish in the Chinese garden court of the Metropolitan Museum of Art or living with sheep as an “artist’s retreat,” are reactions against our relationship to the natural world that has been supplanted by an idea of nature.



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