

KNEE HIGH

Dana Donaty is an accomplished painter who doesn't mind the taking risks to explore new visual territory and the accompanying rewards. Her last celebrated exhibition at the Paul Fisher Gallery titled *A Charmed Life* was a fascinating and bold survey of the artist's multi-layered portraits, abstract "bricks," and exotic flamenco dancers. If you looked closely at some of the paintings it was possible to get a clue to her next series, as in some of the backgrounds one can spot the beginnings of a virtual festival of cartoonish figures drawn from memory. These little animated creatures are carried over into her latest work, and are now gathered around the shoes. High heels and ballet slippers of dancers shown only knee high, in an attempt to join in on the fun and somehow become members of the troupe. The odd and eccentric variety of colorful mini-creatures steals the show, as the focus zeros in on the antics of a caravan of traveling minstrels. The fascinating thing about these quaint party animals is that they are not only having a great time, but Donaty convinces us of their potential reality and believability, that directly stems from the artist's creativity; oddly enough without a single recognizable connection to any previously published cartoon characters. Completely unique and a story within a story, her new depicted adventure shows no elements of stage fright as the artist-choreographer, set designer, wardrobe lady, animator, colorist, and stand-up comedian produces a show-stopping first act that likely will have a long and profitable run.

Bruce Helander is an artist who writes on art. He is a former White House Fellow of the National Endowment for the Arts and the former Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs of the Rhode Island School of Design. He is a regular contributor to *The New Yorker* and *The Huffington Post*, and has a bestselling book, *Learning to See—An Artist's View on Contemporary Artists*. He is the former Editor-in-Chief of *The Art Economist*. He is the 2014 inductee to the *Florida Artists Hall of Fame*.