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"Sight Unseen" award winner opens at Lounge Theater 2 with impact

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Sameerah Luqmaan-Harris and Jason Weiss in SIGHT UNSEEN by Donald Margulies Photo by Ed Krieger

Photos and images for the play "Sight Unseen" at the Lounge Theatre 2 in Hollywood
Ed Krieger

"Sight Unseen" is an award winning play that opened this past Saturday, March 14th at the Lounge Theatre 2 in Hollywood. It won the OBIE in 1992 for Best New American Play. This performance is news worth on three fronts, first the typical all white cast is now interracial. Second, the play deals with questions of what is [art](#) and is there integrity in making it a business. Third is the ticket price in light of the recent proposals by Actor's Equity in regards to small 99 seat Theaters.

"Sight Unseen" is the story of an [artist](#) Jonathan Waxman played by Jason Weiss, and his former lover Patricia, played by Sameerah Luqmaan-Harris. Waxman decides to pay Patricia and her husband a visit in England when he has his first London art opening. The director Nicole Dominguez from the start wanted an interracial cast. Surprisingly according to Dominguez not one word was changed from the original production and the order of the play is the same. Yet the lead character Patricia uses the

word "Tribe" in the final scene. According to Dominguez, "we all are members of a tribe." Also one of Waxman's art pieces shows an interracial couple which could be two lovers or the commission of a crime, and has such a different emphases when discussed by interracial characters.

The play is often described as dealing with Antisemitism issues but it is not one sided. Though Patricia's husband Nick played by co-producer Mark Belnick insults Waxman's Judaism and his art as pornography, this is contrasted with Waxman's treatment of Patricia at one point in his life and his need to say within the traditions of his tribe. When German art curator/ journalist Grete, played by Casey McKinnon interviews Waxman, he insists his art is not Jewish but American and yet specifically stresses the horror of the Holocaust. while Grete states "Horror is horror." Thus the casting of this production spins a different and modern view on this still new play.

As to the subject of art, according to the character of Nick, "Art is devised as a celebration of beauty," and yet he finds nothing beautiful in Waxman's work, save perhaps one work done of his wife Patricia. Waxman though stresses that Art is participatory. Perhaps the line that best fits the title of the play, "In art, as in life we tend to affect people in ways we can't always see." Perhaps stealing a quote from the Russian philosopher Leo Tolstoy, "Art is truth." The play shows the conflict in society between the starving artist creating work for a higher cause, versus the artist who is driven to make a living and some of the disillusionment in that hero worship. An interesting history on the subject of the starving artist can be found on the website for the [Community of Digital Professionals](#) which also lists viable art related careers. In the play the artist is driven to create the work at the level of financial gain, and yet disillusionment and conflict arise from obsession with money, fame, and the need for art to be for art's sake.

The third news worth aspect of this production is that tickets are being priced at \$25 a seat. Mark Belnick is a producer with [Wasatch Theatrical Ventures](#) which is a company devoted to bringing great American Drama at a high quality and a reasonable price. Belnick (Nick) in an interview included with the press packet stresses that the recent proposals made by Actor's Equity, if adopted, would make "what is already financially infeasible for most of us will probably become impossible for all of us." According to this [Examiner article by Bob Leggett](#), the proposal would require that under 99 seat theatres pay their actors at least minimum wage. As stated in the article according to LA City Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell the small [theater](#) houses were created not for actors to make money, but for the actor to perfect their craft.

Actor Jason Weiss after the performance stipulated being on sets is where the money is. According to the [words of National Executive Director David White](#), of SAG AFTRA, the union of Film, television, new media, and broadcasting also consists of "struggling artists working each day to break through for their first chance." For actors in film and television Student films and new media contracts take the place of the 99 seat theatre where film and television actors can work on their style of acting, yet [according to the SAG AFTRA website](#) state and federal wages may still apply. Thus all actors and performers in Los Angeles and anyone who enjoys art or are concerned about their art

can relate to the themes of "Sight Unseen."

"Sight Unseen" will be playing on Fridays and Saturdays at 8 pm, and on Sunday's at 7 pm through April 26th (no performance April 3rd - 5th). The Lounge Theatre 2 is located at 6201 Santa Monica Blvd, Los Angeles, CA. Reservations can be made at 323-960-4412 or online at www.plays411.net/unseen.

SUGGESTED LINKS

- "Disconnection" Religious Good Intention to Controlled Thought
- Cherry Orchard a Comedy and Tragedy that is Worthy of a Young Audience
- "Dreamscape" a police shooting Brought to life in Beats
- Star crossed Romeo & Juliet Raw & Real
- "El Grade de Coca Cola" Timeless Rewind Revamped



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