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## George Herms Re-emerges: A new exhibition in Los Angeles celebrates the artist's latest work.

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It would be hard to count the many lives of the artist George Herms. Since he started making collages in the '50s in Los Angeles, during the birth of a young Beat bohemia led by Wallace Berman and Dennis Hopper and Allen Ginsberg, the man who has been called the godfather of West Coast assemblage art has re-emerged from semi-obscurity on six or seven separate occasions.

When in 2008, the semi-retired fashion designer Adam Kimmel built his fall mens collection around the democratic ideals of the Semina movement, Herms modeled the workwear-inspired clothes for the lookbook. A charismatic countercultural gentleman, Herms has also become a spirit animal to a younger generation of artists, who, like him, tend to use found objects—trash, literally—and other unglamorous materials in their work. (In 2011, Rita Ackermann, Dan Colen, Elliott Hundley, Hanna Liden, Nate Lowman, and Ryan Trecartin paid homage in a group show dedicated to Herms at MOCA in Los Angeles.)



"That's my whole thing," Herms says. "I turn shit into gold. I just really want to see something I've never seen before." His work has been slowly but steadily evolving for more than half a century, rambling between collage, sculpture, performance, poetry, and even opera. But after he discovered he was gravely ill in January, he was unable to work for much of this year. "The treatments took me out for six months," he says now. "I was in this cocoon of pain." Recently, however, his prognosis brightened. And to celebrate yet another rebirth, Herms is opening a show of new collages and sculptures tomorrow night at L.A.'s OHWOW gallery. Titled "Emergio," the exhibition—featuring colorful, vibrant collages often bedecked by butterfly wings—is "my emerging from that cocoon," says Herms.

It would be hard to read the pieces as anything less than hopeful, even without the personal context. Not that Herms is especially squeamish about exposing himself. "At the hospital, the doctors put all kinds of tubes in me," he recalls. "When they removed them, I ended up with a second navel. So, at the opening, we're going to have a booth where people can come see The Man With Two Navels. We're going to charge 25 cents, like at the fair." He laughs, and adds, "I'm just trying to come out on the other side of this illness with my sense of humor intact—and these works are the equivalent of a smile on my face."

*"Emergio" runs from September 14 – October 26, 2013, at OHWOW, 937 N. La Cienega Boulevard in Los Angeles.*