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## Galleries & Museums

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### Critic's Choice

**Edra Soto**

Identity art tends to be repetitively earnest -- *my ethnicity is spiritual! my people have suffered!* -- but Edra Soto realizes that putting your tongue in your cheek can stimulate your brain. Though her new show at Rowland Contemporary -- "The Chacon-Soto Show: Featuring 'The Greatest Companions'" -- ostensibly focuses on Iris Chacon, an iconic Puerto Rican TV star, Chacon is almost never glimpsed. A bunch of apelike action figures with painted masks perch on a filing cabinet



*The Greatest Companions #13*

in one corner of the space, while giant, labial paper flowers squat before the gallery attendant's table. The paintings on the wall mostly feature anonymous simians and the occasional fluffy dog, all flamboyantly dressed and gyrating on nightclub stages that vanish into garish abstractions. Everything drips tackiness -- except, surprisingly, the faces of the apes in the paintings, which are sharply and evocatively rendered. Here a she-ape kicks up her hindquarters with a look of exquisite delight, there an apparently adolescent missing link furrows his brow in what looks like constipation. Elsewhere two females bend over provocatively, their faces obscured, while in the background lurks a blurred, masked figure. What would we see if they turned toward us? Are they human or not? In the context of the room, their identity becomes not a celebration or even a statement but a question -- funny, sexy, mysterious, and more than a little uncomfortable. ➡➡ Through 12/13: Fri-Sat 11 AM-5 PM or by appointment, Rowland Contemporary, 1118 W. Fulton, 312-421-6275 or [rowlandcontemporary.com](http://rowlandcontemporary.com). --Noah Berlatsky