

'Young Curators, New Ideas II'

P.P.O.W.

It was a nice idea to give over this gallery to seven fledgling curators, each of whom arranged a "micro-exhibition" of budding artists, and the show was perfectly pleasant. But nothing—neither the curatorial concepts nor the artists' works—seemed really new or astonishing. And putting these disparate mini-exhibitions in the same space made the show seem like a Twitter feed of Curatorial Studies 101.

"Comet Fever," curated by Nico Wheadon, dealt with hysteria and the occult, and it included several interesting works, such as Noelle Lorraine Williams's weird bridal sculpture, *Condoleezza Forsaken* (2009), and Dawit L. Petros's *A Sampling of a Sequence of Thoughts, Meditations, Digressions, Associations and Recollections Derived from a Series of Walks through Harlem Double Cube Formation* (2009). "Inaugural Reference Archive and Library," curated by a four-person group called Cleopatra's, was composed of a bookshelf holding texts donated by established curators. "Deconstructing the Female Gaze," by the duo Women in Photography, dealt with stereotypes

about woman photographers, while "1973," curated by Megha Ralapati, offered one shadowy video by Jaret Vadera about received ideas. Karen Archey curated "Low Museum," more or less about her own work, lending another meaning to subjectivity. Cecilia Jurado (of Y Gallery in Queens) wisely limited her project, "In Heaven," to two pieces—Norma Markley's white neon clouds and Tom Fruin's white neon nooses—to address anxiety.

The winner here was Jose Ruiz's "The Individual & The Family," which underscored the relationship between collaborative effort and identity-based art. Ruiz selected Bryan Zanisnik's two hilarious, pathetic, and profound staged photographs of his parents; a wall of single lost gloves, each with a hand-painted mate, by Las Hermanas Iglesias; and an interactive cabinet of drawers and niches, with a blue Styrofoam cloud and a big wooden wheel, by J&J, titled *Santa (You Complete Me)*, 2009. The "gifts"—sculptures, drawings, and home-made dolls—that filled the drawers were continually replenished as they vanished.

—Kim Levin

John Currin

Andrea Rosen

Whatever the merits one might see in John Currin's large paintings, it is admittedly difficult to read much beyond the apparent misogyny in the artist's works on paper. In a gallery filled with almost 80 drawings and paintings in ink, pencil, conté crayon, charcoal, gouache, and watercolor, there were only a couple—*The Moved Over Lady* and the related *Activist* (both 1991)—in which anything approaching human sympathy was evident. Unfortunately neither of these is a particularly well-executed or even finished drawing, but the pieces in the show that were more thoroughly worked out were so soured by their subject matter that it was a challenge to appreciate them.

In some of the works, women

were portrayed as monstrously deformed figures, objects of obsession or ridicule. They were either pneumatic or spindly,



John Currin, *Braless*, 1992, ink on paper, 11 1/4" x 7 1/4".
Andrea Rosen.

and their personalities had all the depth of pin-ups or locker-room graffiti. They smile confidently when their soccer-ball breasts are high and firm, as in *Head Nurse* (1995), and look despondent when those same breasts hang limp and unsupported, as in *Braless* (1992). The few men who accompanied them (there were eight in the exhibition) appeared either as privileged spectators, like the ogling doctors in a couple of gouaches from 1998, or as participants in professor-student affairs, in pictures like *Autumn Lovers* (1994).

Currin emerged from this show as an able and restless technician: he shades charcoal here, crosshatches ink somewhere else, and tosses off facile watercolor sketches. But this troubling though genuinely fascinating exhibition raised questions. First, is Currin actually the misogynist his work suggests, or is misogyny merely his subject matter? And second, one wonders, why do these mostly dispiriting works—borrowed from more than 50 private and institutional collections—enjoy the widespread popularity that they do?

—Robert Ayers



Bryan Zanisnik, *Mom and Dad in Outer Space*, 2007,
C-print, 41" x 30 3/4". P.P.O.W.