

PISS *and* **VINEGAR**

Two Generations
of Provocateurs

NINA CHANEL ABNEY

ROBERT ARNESON

SUE COE

ROBERT COLESCOTT

NICOLE EISENMAN

R. CRUMB

NATALIE FRANK

PETER SAUL

HILARY HARKNESS

ROBERT WILLIAMS

PRESS DECK



A Generational Battle of Subversive Wit at Tribeca's "Piss and Vinegar"

Come for the "maniacal spirit," stay for Hilary Harkness's masterpiece.

Laura van Straaten, January 31, 2017



"Piss and Vinegar: Two Generations of Provocateurs," now showing at the New York Academy of Art in Tribeca, is totally worth it, even if just for one artwork: a painting by artist Hilary Harkness.

First, the show. The exhibition aims to contrast an earlier generation of artists who use shock in their work with a younger generation of contemporary artists who use shock to different ends. As the show was being assembled, the curators realized the older generation was all men and the second, all women.

"It's boys versus girls," one New York Academy of Art employee short-handed—just like the games kids used to play at recess. Fittingly, the show's on view in NYAA's gymnasium-sized exhibition space through March 5.

The boys here are Robert Arneson, Robert Colescott, R. Crumb, Peter Saul, and Robert Williams. Their typically satirical and sarcastic paintings and prints display the cultural influences of the 1960s, the decade in which they came of age. (Think psychedelia and MAD magazine).

The girls' team is mostly younger: Nina Chanel Abney, Sue Coe, Nicole Eisenman, Natalie Frank, and Harkness, the show's MVP. The exhibition curators describe the women's body of work as exploring, "the same subversive wit and dark, maniacal spirit."

"Each artist here has art-historical fluency and serious technical skill but used both to push the boundaries of so-called good taste. They've chosen to pursue uncomfortable and maybe unpopular themes and to risk having their work called vulgar or grotesque," says the academy's dean Peter Drake, co-curator of the show along with George Adams.

Now, hear ye, hear ye: Hilary Harkness. Forget the fact that *Nervous in the Service* was completed nearly eight ago, in 2009. It is fresh, in all senses of the word.

Harkness depicts a painstakingly rendered cross section of the collector's New York townhouse, but she's populated nearly every corner with a swarm of sailors involved in any sexual act you can possibly imagine, and many more that you can't. When I puzzle over one tryst with two sailors and three penises, she laughs, "Oops!"

At just 25 by 31 inches, *Nervous* begs for a lean-in, yet reads as an epic narrative with no beginning, middle, or end. It's an orgiastic Fleet Week fantasy, to which she has given each of the more than a hundred figures not only a face and body that is uniquely attractive but also a penis that is fully individuated in shape, color, and, shall we say, personality—even as each one is enormous.

Of the overall effect: "I see it as a male orgy to celebrate his fantastic art collection," she says, noting that the collector is gay and that she enjoyed the challenges of painting gay men having sex, though at first, "I wasn't sure I had the authority, even though I could relate in part." (She is married to a woman.)

The art collection is all there, though she has taken some liberties with placement. "There's the Lichtenstein drawing. And the collector really does have this Delacroix in a nook in his kitchen," she says, pointing to the postage stamp version she'd painted.

There are also a bunch of art-world insider references, mixed with flights of fancy. One is Harkness's dapper but daring depiction of gallerist Matthew Marks. "He's walking off with a few stolen objects while bribing the doorman to look the other way," she explains, pointing him out. "Why? I don't know. It's not an accusation of anything." She squints at Marks' carefully rendered chic: "I just thought he'd look good in some Versace."

Elsewhere, atop a toilet shaped like Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim, Cyd Charisse makes a cameo, attired in her green get-up from *Singin' in the Rain*. On the floor below, a Peggy Guggenheim drag queen canoodles with other guests on a couch. What was the inspiration for including references to Guggenheim? "The owner of the painting also owns furniture that Peggy Guggenheim had in her gallery *Art of This Century*—see, look here right by her," Harkness says, adding that her fascination with that furniture continues and now informs a work in progress.

On Wednesday, Harkness was part of a panel discussion in which she seems to have played the role of provocateuse especially well. She joined Frank and Saul along with the former New York Times critic Ken Johnson, who served as moderator. At one point, Johnson asked about the distinction between art and pornography. Gesturing to the works on the walls around them—filled with nudity, grotesquery and gore—Harkness retorted by asking Johnson, "Well, does this turn you on?" The audience laughed. "No," Johnson replied. And, with the double satisfaction of having nailed a really good line and the feeling that perhaps people can finally put that debate behind them, the artist dropped her mic.

"Piss and Vinegar: Two Generations of Provocateurs" is on view through March 5 at The New York Academy of Art, 111 Franklin St. in New York.

PISS *and* VINEGAR

ARTNEWS

9 Art Events to Attend in New York City This Week

Opening: “Piss and Vinegar” at New York Academy of Art

By The Editors of ARTnews Posted 01/17/17 11:42 am

In times such as these, when truth and common decency are in short supply, we could all do with a shot of some “Piss and Vinegar.” To that end, the New York Academy of Art has brought together five 1960s-era male artists and five contemporary female artists, all united by their shared subversive sensibilities and wit. What these artists may lack in pleasant subject matter, they more than make up for in their fierce conviction, marking them as names fit for recognition: Robert Arneson, Robert Colescott, R. Crumb, Peter Saul, Robert Williams, Nina Chanel Abney, Sue Coe, Nicole Eisenman, Natalie Frank, and Hilary Harkness.

New York Academy of Art, 111 Franklin Street, 6–8 p.m.



Editors' Picks: 10 Art Events to See in New York This Week

artnet News, January 16, 2017



Thursday, January 19–Sunday, March 5

4. Piss and Vinegar at the New York Academy of Art

Curated by dean Peter Drake, and gallerist George Adams, Piss and Vinegar combines two generations of artistic “provocateurs”: five men who came of age in the 1960s and five contemporary female artists. The list includes: Robert Arneson, Robert Colescott, R. Crumb, Peter Saul, and Robert Williams, alongside Nina Chanel Abney, Sue Coe, Nicole Eisenman, Natalie Frank, and Hilary Harkness. The show highlights the artists’ focus on uncomfortable—often taboo—themes, and willingness to risk having their work called vulgar or grotesque. A day prior to the opening reception on January 19 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Robert Mankoff and Ken Johnson will host a talk on the topic of “Visual Art and Humor.”

Location: New York Academy of Art,
111 Franklin Street

Price: Free

Time: Talk, January 18 at 6:30. Opening reception, January 19, 6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.

—Eileen Kinsella

PISS *and* VINEGAR



Generations of Artist-Provocateurs Join Forces in 'Piss and Vinegar'

Andrew Nunes Feb 6 2017, 2:20pm

An ongoing exhibition at the New York Academy of Art explores how pushing buttons artistically has changed over the years.

The old guard meets a new generation of artists in Piss and Vinegar, an ongoing group show at the New York Academy of Art. Rather than the typical scenario of the stubborn old clashing with the unorthodox new, each group represents the provocateurs of their respective eras, employing satire, subversion, and intensity to dig into the bellies of their respective subject matters.

The artworks on view vary in stylistic approach and medium, but all of them possess an in-your-face quality. A sculpture by Robert Arneson depicts two conjoined heads emblazoned with the words "Fried Commie Jew Spies" on their foreheads, accompanied by an American flag price tag that reads "I LIKE IKE". A work by Hilary Harkness shows dozens of women working frantically and semi-nude on an industrial project site, while another work portrays a gay male orgy happening throughout a multi-floored mansion in glorious detail. A comic strip by R. Crumb, below, embodies toilet humor.

In total, five contemporary female artists and five male artists who came of age in the 60s (four of whom are coincidentally named Robert) fill up the show's roster. The clear-cut divisions in generation and gender reflect the changes that both the art world and our cultural landscape have undergone over the past 50 years. Peter Drake, the co-curator of the exhibition and Dean of the NYAA explains, "When George Adams [another co-curator] and I first started to look at this older generation of intensely imaginative, representational artists, from the Chicago Imagists to the Bay Area Funk and the LA Lowbrow scenes, it became clear that, while there were female artists like Gladys Nilsson and Christina Ramberg who were very engaged in these communities, they didn't have as strong an impact on the larger art world as artists such as Peter Saul and Robert Williams had."

Drake tells The Creators Project, "Whether this was due to larger discrimination in that time is something we can't answer. Whereas with the younger generation of artists, it became immediately clear that many of the strongest proponents of this kind of intense, self-deprecating, and deeply provocative art-making were women," he says. "This shift from cultural exclusion to broad-based inclusion was fascinating. Why are contemporary women drawn to this highly expressive, politically charged, and revealing mode of art-making? And how has their acceptance impacted progressive figuration and art-making in general?"



While there is no easy answer to Drake's inquiries, there are notable differences in the subject matter of each generation of art agitators. "Some part of the anger of the earlier generation is a result of feeling marginalized by the larger art world. They embraced popular culture almost as a thumb in the face of the status quo," the curator explains. "With the younger generation, the vehicle of popular culture may be a given, but the range of issues is broader, including race, gender, identity, the abuse of power, and the threat of personal freedom."

Piss and Vinegar will be on view at the New York Academy of Art until March 5, 2017.



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