

76 GRAND STREET NEW YORK NY 10013



AUREL SCHMIDT

MAN EATER

OCTOBER 4 – NOVEMBER 1, 2008
76 GRAND STREET
OPENING SATURDAY OCTOBER 4, 6-9PM

Man Eater, an exhibition of new drawings by Aurel Schmidt, opens at Deitch Projects' Grand Street space October 4. In this new body of work, Ms. Schmidt munches her way through Modernist masterpieces, transforming them with graphite and colored pencil into seething masses of interwoven debris.

Ms. Schmidt builds Arcimboldo-esque accumulations from street trash, the darker elements in nature, and researched historical imagery. Drawn with an elegant and sensitive line, she slurries together her brew of beasts and spreads them over the page to form faces, bodies, landscapes, or abstract artworks. A Grecian bust is transformed into a terrible tangle of twisting snakes. A face forms out of discarded fast food and maggots. A crooked cigarette butt smile appears over wormy lips as a woman's burned out eyeholes stare blankly forward.

In *Man Eater* Ms. Schmidt adapts her technique of punk assemblage drawing to various suggestive subjects, including masterpieces of Modernist Art. Gravitating towards the most iconic and most macho, she turns the gallery into a sort of MoMA gone wrong, a soiled and sullied gendering of sexualized subjects. Picasso's *Weeping Women* are her first meal, eaten up with her eyes and transformed into poop with her pencil. Composition and color are retained while one lady's hat becomes a nest of seagulls and pigeons, her eyes are transformed into circles of feeding flies, the eyebrows are drawn as crawling centipedes and her tears form pink cockroaches. For another weeper, her choker is drawn as a gravel neck brace, and her nematodal grimace is lined with crushed lipstick teeth.

Two De Kooning women are fed into the shredder next, this time the famous double grin of *Woman and Bicycle* 1952 is formed by double dildos, her imposing bosom lined with dead rats and car

deodorizers. In another part of the exhibition we find Jackson Pollock's *Number 8, 1949* reconstituted with Fruit Loops, dead sparrows, condoms and creepy crawly insects flung about as exuberantly as the original spoooges of paint.

The centerpiece of the exhibition and the terminal work of the Modernist tradition features an expansive Morris Louis painting re-imagined as colorful illusionistic vomit instead of poured paint. Barfed Indian food, blood and beer mark this piece as Ms. Schmidt's man-eater purging finale.

Other works in exhibition round out Ms. Schmidt's dark worldview with less direct arthistorical parentage. The entranceway houses three petite exquisite condomed vegetables called "Self-love" "Me, Myself and I", and "One is the Loneliest Number" whose detail and isolation on the page suggest a new Naturalist drawing approach. Three large grinning works in the main gallery come out of her explorations in making simple faces from debris, these being the largest and most accomplished. Their smiling abjection seems to run a slimy hand down the viewer's trousers.

What is all this desecration about? Ms. Schmidt sees the progression of Modern Art as chasing a purity that she seeks to problematize. Here, works of art synonymous with "progress" are reconstituted with the detritus that progress produces. With humor and bad taste, the abject is made visible, the negated body is resurrected and decomposing. If this attack is gendered, it is only incidentally as Ms. Schmidt reinvents works portraying the woman's body in an embodied fashion. She does not seek to show the woman as a beautiful flower

but rather as a shitty mom, a slut, a masturbator and a drug addict.

Borrowing from vernacular culture is a trick as old as Modernism itself and Aurel is concomitantly a connoisseur of her cultural moment. Aurel makes Naturalist drawings for the urban naturalist. As avidly as an Audubon chased a chickadee, Ms. Schmidt scavenges street shit and squirrels it home to her studio to draw. Her selections are not about beauty or ugliness per se, but treat both the natural beasts and the human detritus with the same interested eye.

Her first works, presented last October in Deitch's private project space at 96 Greene Street, are titled *Burn Outs* and make anthropomorphic faces from drawn objects with burned out eyes and mouths. The following and much harsher series, *Party Monsters*, developed for the traveling exhibition *Mail Order Monsters*, are ghoulish burned-out portraits of New York nightlife gone wild. Inspired by her personal love/hate relationship with the scene and some of the macho art being made in New York City right now, these pieces run amok with drugs, drugs, drugs and sex.

This exhibition will include the release of Aurel Schmidt's new book *What Bleeds for Seven Days and Doesn't Die* comprising these drawings and her past three years of artmaking. Aurel is a self-taught artist born in Kamloops, Canada in 1983 and has lived and worked in New York City for three years. She has exhibited at Peres Projects, LA, the Deste Foundation in Athens Greece, the MUMOK in Vienna, Colette in Paris, and Terence Koh's Asian Song Society.

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