



NEW YORK

Stewart Uoo and Jana Euler

The Whitney Museum of American Art // May 10–August 11

VISITORS ARE IN FOR a dystopian, apocalyptic treat with “Outside Inside Sensibility,” ostensibly a two-person exhibition, though Uoo’s bleak, postfashion, sci-fi mannequin cyborgs steal the show. For all the recent fuss over museum surveys of fashion lines, such as the 2011 Alexander McQueen retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art—which featured beautiful, well-constructed dresses pinned perfectly to mannequins—Uoo’s take on the industry is decidedly disheveled. Looking like they were salvaged from some blown-out, war-zone shopping mall, his doyens are cobbled together from polyurethane resin, razor wire, acrylic paint, computer cables, and even little maggots and flies that are glued to their pursed lips and faces. The bugs aren’t applied with a shocking, mass-death, Damien Hirst fly-canvas density; rather, they crawl here and there over the limbless figures, as if they were dismembered rotting corpses left out in a *Mad Max* desert.

Named after the *Sex and the City* characters Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha, at first glance Uoo’s sculptural avatars seem overly styled and crudely constructed—that’s the point. It’s as if the New York-centric TV show’s glamorous, unrealistically successful protagonists had just ordered cosmopolitans and been promptly buried alive, only to be brought back as tragic 99-cent-store Frankenstein brides, complete with the cute, soiled duffle bag and the limp, multicolor dreads that *No Sex, No City: Carrie*, 2013, sports. Cosmically speaking, they had it coming; framed within the context of our digital age’s “never-ending stream

of data,” as the press materials state, including social media and text messages, Uoo’s work seems

just as—if not more—concerned with the Disneyfication of New York City itself, so idealized and misrepresented in the popular media as to become nauseatingly commercial. The young artist wreaks his revenge fantasy with spunky pluck and attention to detail: The show’s characters have never looked so cheap and grotesque, so far from reality and yet so somehow part of it.

Uoo’s mise-en-scène, which includes a chiffon curtain at the gallery entrance and a white denim carpet, overshadows Euler’s oil painting *Whitney*, 2013, her sole contribution to the show. The canvas makes little sense paired with Uoo’s work despite its similarly stupid humor. A double entendre on the word *Whitney*, it places Whitney Houston’s face writ large beside the Whitney Museum’s Brutalist Marcel Breuer building façade; the two Whitneys couldn’t be an odder couple. Overlaid with musical notes and thin, nude torsos bending in impossibly loopy positions, this lighthearted work seems strangely paired with Uoo’s figures, which curator Jay Sanders describes as “a clique of stylishly ravaged urban females having a night out at a museum”—the museum from hell. If I had to pick which Whitney Museum to go to, Euler’s or Uoo’s, I’d pick the one starring the multi-platinum pop star over the one filled with tipsy femmes fatales from the dead—they’re fabulous, but so frightening.

—David Everitt Howe

Installation view of “Outside Inside Sensibility,” 2013.

NEW YORK

Vittorio Brodmann

Leslie Fritz // May 12–June 22

BRODMANN’S NEW YORK debut renders bulbous, slapdash forms reminiscent of the golden age of cartoons (think early *Merrie Melodies* or even *The Ren & Stimpy Show*) with virtuosic-if-haphazard painterly brushwork, the resulting works appearing akin to an exquisite corpse from Hades. Both the impressionistic doodle and a more classic illustration style appear throughout the show.

Puberty, Intelligent Design, and Managing Your Bank Account, 2013, pairs what seems to be a miffed, tentacle-laden cloud with an anxious pink-and-blue mouse, complete with a drop shadow. The comic umbra departs from the expected content of traditional painting and instead moves toward the easily identifiable, slapstick cheap tricks of cartooning: A puff of smoke tells us that a Roadrunner has recently zipped away; pearls of sweat jumping from the brow of a mouse communicate its rampant anxiety. The drop shadow signifies action—perhaps a falling anvil or a fast-moving coyote. *The Head Is Quite Light, the Bottom Weighs Heavily*, 2013, expertly plays with positive and negative space in a series of semitranslucent, variably crackly washes as calligraphic eyes melt into noses and breasts, and male members into feet. (Droopy phalluses and buoyant breasts make frequent appearances throughout the show.)

In an exhibition of somewhat diminutively sized paintings, the exceptionally large *Scrambled Eggs*, 2013, stands out formally as well as physically. We see a distended, angry suit-clad man punching the air with scrota for fists against the background of a concerned face that could double as a moon. Three additional forlorn figures—a gray drunk clown, a perturbed smoking dog, and a gender-defying Hassidic Jew—line the corners of the canvas. It remains unclear what the confluence of these various figures means, and the work’s title aids little in its interpretation (as is the case in the remainder of the show). A generous critic could deduce that the combined

dour dispositions of these figures speak to a communal emotional plague. Since all the heterogeneous characters in Brodmann’s mise-en-scène seem to be deprived downers, perhaps it’s a Platonic reminder to “be kind, for everyone is fighting a harder battle,” though the artist offers a frustrating dearth of clues.

While Brodmann’s practice consistently employs comic-style graphic rendering, one would be remiss to connect his work with comics-meet-painting precedents such as Richard Prince or Roy Lichtenstein, the work of the latter two diverging by their engagement with appropriation and parody. Rather, Brodmann’s phantasmagoric compositions are knowingly, presciently goofy and endearing, and critical only when taken as a total practice: Like many of his young peers who employ illustration-based imagery—such as Sanya Kantarovsky, Jana Euler, and Oliver Osborne—Brodmann’s paintings signify a return to personal, vulnerable, and meaningfully handcrafted content after so-called corporate aesthetics have run amok in Europe. If post-Internet art, or work that speaks through corporate rhetoric to articulate a collective alienation, is a prevalent mode of address in contemporary art, Brodmann responds to this by personalizing the hellholes we all exist in. —Karen Archey



Vittorio Brodmann
Moods, 2013. Oil on canvas, 11 x 11¾ in.