

Froot Loops

Lisa Frank, Art History Major, at Fourteen30 Contemporary

By Megan Burbank March 18, 2015

THE TEEN-GIRL Tumblr aesthetic is alive and well at Fourteen30 Contemporary. In curator Adrienne Rubenstein's group show, Maraschino, works from Alex Chaves, Josh Mannis, Annelie McKenzie, and Nolan Simon delight and repulse, like the show's sweetly disgusting namesake.

If the teen-girl Tumblr aesthetic is a new concept for you, congratulations! You're not 18! But also, a shorthand: Remember Lisa Frank? That purveyor of frolicking unicorns and big-eyed kittens emblazoned in a garishly warm palette on the Trapper Keepers of middle school girls circa 1996? Now imagine Lisa Frank is an art history major, and all those smiling dolphins and nuzzling neon puppies contain coded messages about gender. In art, the aesthetic translates to "grownups, so to speak, channeling or connecting in some way with a constructed idea of the teenage girl aesthetic and adolescence," write critics Alicia Eler and Kate Durbin at the art blog Hyperallergic.

This seems to be what's going on in painter Annelie McKenzie's cheerful bastardizations of classic art. Through layers of puffy paint, duct tape, glitter, and—it would seem—sheer force of will, McKenzie adds a third dimension to 2D renderings of art historical images of women, the paint lumpy and uneven, as if pushed out of a Betty Crocker frosting tube. Instead of using canvas or board, McKenzie covers existing decorative frames and their backings—the entire surface. The effect is broadly subversive in that, you know, she's coloring outside the lines. What's more subtle is that these aren't student copies of master works, but parodies constructed with a youthful "girly" style. McKenzie's materials, too, push the works out of the conventional male-dominated world of classic representational painting into an abstract feminized zone of craft-making and mixed media.

McKenzie's paintings are just one slice of this strange little show's offerings. Also of note: Josh Mannis' doodle-like drawings, which look like Little Golden Book illustrations, but drunk; and Nolan Simon's Google image search-influenced paintings.

Fourteen30 is housed in a modest space in Goose Hollow, and primarily focuses on emerging artists, although gallery staff recently announced the addition of Wynne Greenwood to their lineup of represented artists, a coup for a small gallery. Greenwood, whose work is decidedly pre-internet but influenced by riot grrrl, might be considered an early adopter of the teen-girl Tumblr aesthetic. I bet an art school Lisa Frank would approve.