

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Pablo Picasso

Buste

1970

"Picasso: Mosqueteros"

Gagosian Gallery



"Picasso: Mosqueteros,"  
installation view at Gagosian  
Gallery

### GOTHAM ART & THEATER

by Elisabeth Kley

In her 1964 memoir, *Life with Picasso*, Francoise Gilot ripped away the veil of circumspection hiding her ex-lover's vanity, selfishness and sexism from the world. If that weren't enough, in the '60s the 80-year old prototypical genius found himself out of fashion -- irrelevant to an increasingly dematerialized avant-garde. Undaunted, Picasso erupted, dashing off rapturous paintings of theatrically costumed males and nude females with oversized heads, hands and feet, inspired by Rembrandt, Velazquez, Van Gogh, and hippies, free love and flower power.

The characters in Picasso's masquerade also have the artist's own burning black eyes, resembling so many self-portraits dressed up in the various hats, wigs, mustaches and beards he kept on a table in his



**Pablo Picasso**

*Portrait de l'homme à l'épée et à la fleur*

1969

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Gagosian Gallery



**Pablo Picasso**

*Femme*

1972

Gagosian Gallery

more painterly than ever before, with form sometimes on the verge of dissolving into his moody acid colors, Picasso's final works were widely viewed as messy and self-indulgent -- degraded versions of his early masterpieces. In fact, as we know now, he was back in the forefront, fiercely defying prevailing artistic taboos against baroque extravagance.

Picasso's late paintings have not been seen in quantity in New York since the 1984 Guggenheim Museum exhibition, "Picasso: The Last Years: 1963-1973" appeared (in the era of Neo-Expressionism), to mixed reviews. In *Time*, Robert Hughes even wrote that Picasso "appeared to have spent his dotage at a costume party in a whorehouse." This once-scathing criticism seems now to describe a lot of contemporary art. Dana Schutz, Jonathan Meese, Dawn Mellor, Kai Althoff, Bendix Harms and Peter Doig (among others) are again making freely brushed figurative paintings.

Hence, no doubt, the timing of "Picasso: Mosqueteros." Curated by Picasso biographer John Richardson (now working on volume four), this stunning museum-quality exhibition of late paintings, etchings and two ceramic pieces is on view at Gagosian Gallery on West 21st Street until June 6. About 10 percent of the show is for sale, at prices ranging from \$2 million to \$20 million for paintings and \$6,000 to \$40,000 for prints.

Most of the works are depictions of the imaginary



Pablo Picasso

Couple

1970

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Pablo Picasso

Étreinte

1972

Gagosian Gallery

18th-century musketeers that provide the exhibition's title, fabulous hairy-faced characters with ringlets, ruffles and weapons. *Buste* (1970), a man with one orange eye, is rendered in a variety of paint textures, including a thinly washed red shirt covered with thick brown stripes, a globby white collar, a blackened face and a pale green hat with a bulls-eye crown.

*Tête de matador* (1970) has a muddy purple head and a hat with a huge orange tassel, and the chiaroscuro *Buste d'homme* (1971) wears a white vest open to expose a hairy chest. Other male figures have large eyes, delicate shoulders and curly flip-dos, hinting at bearded lady drag. As *New York Times* reporter Carol Vogel noted [here](#), Julian Schnabel is seizing the moment to sell his own late Picasso, a portrait of a woman who looks like she needs a shave.

Genders also merge in *Étreinte* (1972), Picasso's final painting, an image of coitus on the beach painted when the artist was 91 years old. Nipples and genitals are scattered over an intertwined monster in front of a stormy blue sea, with white foam rendered by paint squeezed directly from the tube. According to Richardson, televised wrestling matches inspired the last images of intercourse. But sex was clearly a burning memory for the once-hyper-potent Picasso, who fathered his last child at 67. Sensuality oozes from his explorations of deformity, ornament and disguise.



**John Waters**

*Hollywood Smile Train*

2009

Marianne Boesky Gallery

**John Waters' "Rear Projections"**

Picasso sometimes teetered on the verge of kitsch, a quality anathema to modernist critics, but now much loved. John Waters, our current old master of the genre, has a solo exhibition called "Rear Projections" at Marianne Boesky Gallery until Apr. 28, 2009. The show's title refers to the practice of placing false backgrounds behind actors in films, but it also conjures up various searches for lost time, not to mention the human posterior.

Like Picasso's rival Salvador Dali (another maestro of camp), Waters sports a signature mustache, and in *Town Crier* (2009), a photographed self-portrait, he puckishly holds up a bell in front of a café, dressed in pilgrim attire. Posing as a Puritan in Provincetown, a prime location for gay hedonism, the filmmaker (who has specialized in dirt and bad taste since he made his first movie at 16) clearly has his tongue embedded in his cheek.



**John Waters**

*Rear Projection* (detail)

2009

Marianne Boesky Gallery

As usual, the works consist of photographs chosen from hundreds of snapshots taken of movies and shows on TV, grouped into collections and often digitally altered. Waters' fascination with deformity and death is on display in *Hollywood Smile Train* (2009), eight pictures of celebrities fitted with Photoshop harelips; *LookOut!* (2009), three photographic narratives of glamorous blondes dying in car crashes; and *Necro* (2009), six head shots of bodies in coffins with laboriously made-up faces. But



**John Waters**

**Control**

**2009**

**Marianne Boesky Gallery**



**John Waters**

**La Mer**

**2009**

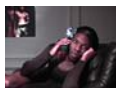
**Marianne Boesky Gallery**



**Kalup Linzy**

**2007**

**Photo by Grant Delin**



**Kalup Linzy**

**Conversations wit de Churen II:**

**All My Churen (video still)**

**2003**

**Studio Museum in Harlem**

the piece de resistance is the work that gives the exhibition its title: *Rear Projection* (2009), a row of voluptuous female bums superimposed with various TV and movie images.

Large-scale sculptures are also on view, including *Control* (2009), a kneeling male mannequin manipulating a defiant female marionette; *Decorative* (2009), an enormous copy of a plastic roach trap; and *La Mer* (2009), a gargantuan reproduction of a pricey container of wrinkle cream. Artifice is a way of life for Waters, but decorum is never his aim. Prices range from \$3,500 to \$12,000 for the photographs and \$15,000 to \$55,000 for the sculptures.

**Kalup Linzy at the Studio Museum**

By contrast, Kalup Linzy, who you could call a specialist in five-o'clock shadow drag, goes for transformations involving a minimum of artifice in low-tech films guaranteed to make his viewers squirm. An exhibition of around 20 of the 31-year-old artist's videos (along with some drawings) can be viewed in "Kalup Linzy: If it Don't Fit" at The Studio Museum in Harlem until June 28.

Linzy grew up in rural Florida, where he sang in the church choir and watched a lot of daytime TV. He first gained attention for hilarious soap opera parodies, including *Conversations wit de Churen II: All My Churen* (2003), the long running series *All My Children* transposed to a southern black environment.

photos courtesy the artist and  
Taxter & Spengemann, New  
York



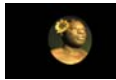
Kalup Linzy

*Conversations wit de Churen II:*

*All My Churen* (video still)

2003

Studio Museum in Harlem



Kalup Linzy

*SweetBerry Sonnet* (video still)

2008

Studio Museum in Harlem



Kinke Kooi

*Baba Jaga*

2007

Feature Inc.

Always identifiable by the gap between his front teeth, Linzy plays three generations of Braswell family members, including a sweet grandmother, a judgmental mother, a messy sister, a shiftless (and handsome) hetero brother, and the autobiographical Taiwan, the gay brother who wants to be an entertainer and often wears a leotard with a flower behind his ear.

In *Churen*, Jojo -- who seems at first to be the messy sister's boyfriend, but is really her dog -- is shot, and a private memorial is planned. Various telephone conflicts ensue, with Linzy supplying all the voices. The episode ends in true soap opera fashion: emotional resolution tied to a final plot twist. The grandmother convinces her daughter to accept her children for who they are; Taiwan sings a sentimental a cappella spiritual promising that all dogs go to heaven; and we learn that Jojo was actually kidnapped by a treacherous friend with a thirst for revenge.

In *Becoming Jada* (2003), a music video takeoff, Linzy performs a bathroom mirror lip synch to an Erykah Badu song, wearing a bath towel turban in front of a shower curtain decorated in a pseudo Moorish pattern. It's a riotous commentary on exoticism in art that harks back to Gauguin and Matisse, while putting a twisted contemporary spin on the classical motif of mirrors and feminine vanity.



**Kinke Kooi**

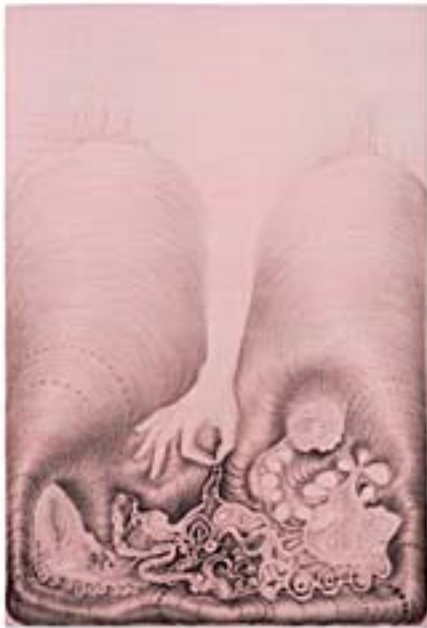
*Flower Girl*

2009

Feature Inc.

### **Kinke Kooi at Feature, Inc.**

Wigs (along with jewelry) pop up in unexpected places in "Let Me Comfort You," Dutch artist Kinke Kooi's exhibition at Feature Inc. until April 25. Her intricate paintings and drawings, executed on color photographs as well as on paper, include images of buildings, underground caverns, a statue and an octopus. All are dressed in pearls and beads and often flowing hair, reminiscent of medieval Madonnas, Las Vegas showgirls and Indian elephants embellished with painted designs.



**Kinke Kooi**

*Digging for Origin*

2007

Feature Inc.

Orange light glows from the windows of *Female View* (2007), a nocturnal photo of a modernist glass box that Kooi has enveloped with layers of necklaces resembling a flexible tornado. In *Baba Jaga* (2007), the structure's base has grown a pair of human legs wearing delicate acrylic ankle bracelets. Long blond tresses entwined with large strings of pearls sprout from the roof on either side, turning the dwelling into a rectangular woman revealing her interior while looking out at the world. And the tiny curtained stages seen through the windows of another bewigged building in *Magical Flower Girls* (2009) suggest enchanted ballets performed within structures that represent bodies in dreams.

The boundaries between inside and outside also dissolve in a series of painstaking drawings on paper prepared with pink acrylic grounds. In *Digging for Origin* (2008) positive and negative space reverse in



**Thomas Trosch**

***When We Discovered You***

**2008**

**Fredericks & Freiser**

a manner reminiscent of *Hide-and-Seek*, Pavel Tchelitchew's famous 1942 image of children's faces materializing between the branches of a tree. Kooi's empty sky similarly turns into a delicate hand reaching between a pair of mountains to pluck out a pearl from an intestinal underground cavern -- a reference, perhaps, to treasures hidden beneath flesh. Prices range from \$3,300 to \$5,800.



**Thomas Trosch**

***The Apprentice***

**2009**

**Fredericks & Freiser**

### **Thomas Trosch "Spring"**

A narrative of art consumption unfolds in Thomas Trosch's opulent paintings, on view in a show called "Spring in Park Lane" at Fredericks Freiser until May 2. The clash between Trosch's delicate colors and his visceral use of paint is mirrored in his subject -- the meeting between civilized frivolity and art's untamed wildness. The heroine of his paintings is a wealthy blond collector who gallivants through living rooms and studios filled with all manner of sculptures and canvases. Rendered in a palette keyed to white that transforms pastels into deep rich hues, the works bring Ensor and Cy Twombly to mind.



**Thomas Trosch**

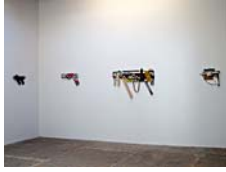
***Chance Meeting***

**2008**

**Fredericks & Freiser**

Starting with scribbled sketches on ready primed linen, Trosch builds up his compositions with areas of paint that range from dripping washes to impastos projecting from the canvas like sculptures in relief. In *When We Discovered You* (2008), a bearded artist with purple skin waves something blue at a canvas hanging from the ceiling on a string of pearls. On the left, an effete white-suited dandy peers at the artist





**Richard Allen Morris**

**"Morris Code"**

**Installation view, 2009**

**Peter Blum Gallery**



**Richard Allen Morris**

***Big Stick***

**1968**

**Peter Blum Gallery**

through a monocle, as if he is examining an animal in the zoo. The white-haired dame with a thickly painted suntan on the right is in the process of dissolving into swirls.

Trosch's paintings don't just represent people consuming art; they also picture art consuming people. Figures barely coalescing from clots and blobs seem ready to disintegrate back into the paint that created them, possibly alluding to the struggles of metamorphosis. *The Apprentice* (2009) features a willowy bare-chested young man holding a palette, surrounded by garish patches of thick paint. And in *Chance Meeting* (2008), the blue-skirted collector blends into a nearly white canvas with a frame the same color as her hair, discretely ignoring the phallic banana-like sculpture beside it. Prices range from \$5,000 to \$22,000.

**Richard Allen Morris "Code"**

Phalluses may also come to mind when viewing Richard Allen Morris' fascinating gun representations at Peter Blum Chelsea, where "Morris Code -- Works from 1957 to 2007"(the second New York solo exhibition by the 76-year-old self-taught San Diego artist) can be seen until May 2. *Big Stick* (1968), the earliest of the group, is studded with nails and clothespins and wrapped with bits of rugs, magazine papers and old paintings. An old tin cup covers the muzzle, as if preventing it from threatening death. Made at a time of worldwide protests against

American imperialism and the Vietnam War, this playful illustration of Theodore Roosevelt's motto, "speak softly and carry a big stick," could have been inspired by flowers placed in bayonets during a 1967 peace rally at the Pentagon.

More formal work can be seen in the main gallery, including several stripe compositions from the '70s that appear to be made from fragments of previous paintings. Canvases made in the '80s are covered with globs of fluorescent acrylic and patch, and swirling paint is piled to sculptural heights in smaller pieces from the nineties. *Welcome to Indonesia* (2007), less than six inches in diameter, is a small thick round board covered with a mass of streaky purple paint, like a cupcake frosted with palette scrapings. Prices range from \$2,500 to \$50,000.

**ELISABETH KLEY** is a New York artist and critic.