

Photo Gallery: Art That Makes You Laugh

By Paul Laster
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While many folks think modern and contemporary art — or at least the prices paid for it — is ridiculous, there are some artists who hope that you will laugh along with the absurdity and irony implied by their work. Humor was a prominent trait in the work of the Dadaist, Surrealists, Pop Art artists, and Fluxists, and it's still prevalent in the work of the pluralist practitioners active today. The New York exhibition *Knock Knock: Who's There? That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore*, on view at the Upper East Side's Armand Bartos Fine Art through April 9 and Chelsea's Fred Torres Collaborations through April 24, assembles a playful mix of historical and contemporary artworks, which are certain to leave you in stitches.

Organized by Elana Rubinfeld and Sarah Murkett, the show explores three central themes for humorous situations: playful self-portraiture, the body, and man versus nature. Historical works, dating back to the 1920s, as well as a smattering of contemporary pieces, are exhibited at Bartos, while the mix at Torres consists of works since the 1960s, with the majority of pieces made within the past decade.

Standouts at Bartos include Marc Dennis's amusing paintings of birds thinking of clouds; Sarah Lucas' witty assemblage of a bed base, bucket of cement, pair of suspenders, nylon tights, and an onion; Robert Watts' hilarious *Booger Sizing Chart*; Martha Rosler's feminist photo montage that transforms a woman's body into a surreal smiling face; and Jacob Odonata's fleshy paintings that play with eyes and breasts in profoundly funny ways.

Highlights at Torres are Richard Prince's politically incorrect joke painting about a silk salesman in Florida; Lee Materazzi's slyly staged photo of a guy entangled in a ladder after falling down steps; Trong Nguyen's funny cake, decorated with the word Redrum, that's reflected in a mirror to spell Murder; David Humphrey's absurdly altered stuff animals; and David LaChapelle's ironic found family photos, which he manipulated by digitally inserting new, fun-loving members.

With a title that references a Smiths' song and a great list of established and emerging artists, *Knock Knock: Who's There? That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore* tickles the funny bone while enchanting the mind and eye.