



Young
Blood

OPERA GALLERY
NEW YORK

“**A**

nd the day came when the risk to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.” With this illuminating and formidable sentence, Anaïs Nin perfectly summarizes today’s dilemma for the young who are torn between the material and imaginative comforts of childhood and the vagaries of life as an adult, who, with fresh, young blood pulse to the frenetic rhythm of the Western World’s metropolises. The fifteen artists chosen for this exhibition draw their inspiration from today’s world with that same desire, but express their commitment within this context in a unique way.

The more precocious of these artists often benefited from a nurturing environment that spurred the development of their talent. The result is a keen eye mixed with a very carefree attitude towards worldly matters. Take **Charlotte Filbert**, for example. She’s been painting since the age of five, drawing her inspiration from ocean and mountain

landscape scenes. Her compositions are strongly inspired by traditional Mexican iconography, as seen in her way of oversimplifying things and her palette of pure colors (Meditate). She defines her subjects as if she were cutting a mosaic, crowned with the glorious lessons of the master Impressionists (Girl and Sculpture). In **Camilla D’Errico’s** drawings, one can almost feel the freshness. Inspired by both Japanese mangas and Parisian street urchins, Camilla combines humour with dabs of eroticism to depict her angelic models. In her sweet-and-sour reveries, Camilla’s little babes are always accompanied by two important elements: animals and disguises (The Bonded Tree). **Steve Shanks** devotes his life’s work to childhood with a larger dose of melancholy. With over-developed heads, doll-like bodies, and hypnotic stares, his characters probe the spectator’s intimate stratum. With poetic naiveté, Shanks holds up a mirror to our adult consciousness in the hopes of glimpsing a

reflection of our childhood psyche, helping us bond with his ideals (Eyes like Twins). Partners both in their private and professional lives, Brandt Peters and Kathie Olivas serve up their imagination in a more comic-book style. **Brandt Peters** uses cartoons from Walt Disney and the world of Tim Burton. In a morbid yet humoristic vein, he spoofs our childhood icons, incarnating the outcasts of a society going to the pits by painting scatterbrained animals or abandoned objects (The Arrival). As for **Kathie Olivas**, she has given us the world of Misery Children, little people who look desolate and mean (Restraint). Created in various art-forms such as paintings, engravings, and sculptures in resin, these hybrid beings look busy in a scene populated with giant lollipops and big-toothed rabbits. Childhood is no longer synonymous with pureness and beauty, it also includes a touch of strangeness at its very core.

In conjunction with this childhood theme,

other artists attempt to sublimate woman as beauty’s ideal. This is especially true with certain female artists who draw their inspiration from both European and Asian origins. **Jenn Porreca** is greatly influenced by Japanese mangas and engravings from the Edo period (1605-1868). Her compositions are inspired by Hokusai’s idealized vision of nature, with a narrative touch of Hiroshige. Steeped in scenes of undergrowth bathed in twilight, pretty geishas come to life; the perfect alter-egos to the artist’s scruples. Decked out in traditional Japanese splendor, these elegant ladies advance shyly into the present. By using such a sensitive, obvious parallel between the young lady and the flower (The Capture), Jenn renews, with Asian symbols of happiness and vanity, the fleeting notion of life: it both enchants us and leaves us pensive. The works of **Melissa Forman** find roots in European art of the 19th century, with a touch of pre-Raphaelite references and dabs of photography. Melissa

gives us a gallery of portraits of disenchanted aristocrats, with essentially feminine models illustrating various chapters of an imaginary Bible, such as Eve undoing the forbidden ties of the Tree of Knowledge (She who Relished in Her New Found Knowledge). In *Their Archaic Methods*, she pays tribute to Leonardo Da Vinci while metamorphosing the legendary Vitruvian Man into a woman. This figure becomes the Canon of Proportions of just about everything used in the artist's pictorial universe. The same can be said of the works by **Leah Sarah Bassett** whose thought-process concentrates mostly on the body and the aspirations of women, influenced strongly by masters of chiaroscuro, such as Rembrandt and Caravaggio (*Steeping*). In a different way, **Catherine Haggarty** gives the body both an aesthetic and psychological dimension. Her academic portraits and nudes (*Finishing Touches*) place us in a certain contemplation of the humdrum, reminding us of Bonnard (*Ready; Somewhere in Between*). Such keen interest in the body sometimes takes on a very graphic style. An illustrator

for several American papers and magazines, French artist **Tifenn Python** captures the moment of fragility and doubt in her characters. Mixing drawings, painting, aquarelles and rice paper, Tifenn chisels her bodies with intimacy, turning them into anonymous silhouettes that she then combines and cuts up into soft flat tints (*La Noyade*). With a more biological eye, **Angelo Bellobono** uses a scalpel to chisel his bodies, examining them closely for the slightest crack or chink. All that is human is chemistry and is an ensemble of invisible and organic phenomena controlling our physical forces and mind-sets. The result is tightly focused powerful portraits (*Temporary Winter Party*), inked out and steeped in deep blue and brown acrylics, with, on the surface, lines penned by the artist. (*Temporary Civilization* and *Just People* series).

These artists, then, don't just offer a carefree opinion of the world surrounding them; they are also witnesses to its horrors and absurdities. In a more biting, critical vein, **Jaime Treadwell** accentuates the standardized aspects of the

American way of life. On a backdrop of garish colors, he depicts wrestlers, beauty pageant queens, athletes, and tattooed majorettes. Taken out of context, these subjects seem quite ridiculous in their costumes, as if sterilized. From society to the stage (*Capture and Rescue*), he willingly takes off on a tangent from childhood to offer a more mature parody of adulthood. In a more abstract way, **Emmanuel Bernardoux** saturates the canvas with his paintbrush and pens. Or maybe he's making room for the nothingness of his canvas to welcome cut-out faces dissociated from bodies in liquefaction. Shapes become figures, Biblical messengers, witnesses to life's daily aggressions such as war, sex, poverty, frenetic consumerism, apartheid, and religious fanaticism. While paying an explosive tribute to his masters, Warhol, Rauschenberg and Basquiat, Emmanuel stings us with his ideas. Even within the heart of his pictorial chaos, mass media's icons are omnipresent and obsessive (*Las Vegas [Part I]*). But there's a fine line between obsession and fascination. In his photos, **Frank Keller** studies the sensual

silhouettes of cowgirls horsing around on a backdrop of a city of lights. They indulge in their obscure, mechanical dance. They are a strange theater of modern shadows. A veritable underground New York cultural icon, **Francesco Civetta** is a young entrepreneur that dabbles in everything, feeding off the permanent energy of the Big Apple to launch his *Izzy Gold* brand. Comfortable in the worlds of fashion, art, cinema and electronic music, and following in the footsteps of Keith Haring, he creates merchandise from his drawings: faces of young people painted on newspaper with simplicity and a fresh take (*Sid*).

The up and coming artists of the now are reporting on the reality of today's world with fantasy and fury, while fully appropriating the pictorial medium and changing it to the figurative. That's the power of young blood revamping art's language, while remaining forever linked to its deep cultural roots.

Sandrine Cornault, Art Historian

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Emmanuel Bernardoux

previous page: Las Vegas (part II) • 78 x 47 in • mixed media on canvas

Angelo Bellobono

I'm The Post Punk Son of a Priest • 60.2 x 60.2 in • acrylic on canvas



Angelo Bellobono

Temporary Winter Party 2007 • 60.2 x 60.2 in • acrylic on canvas

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