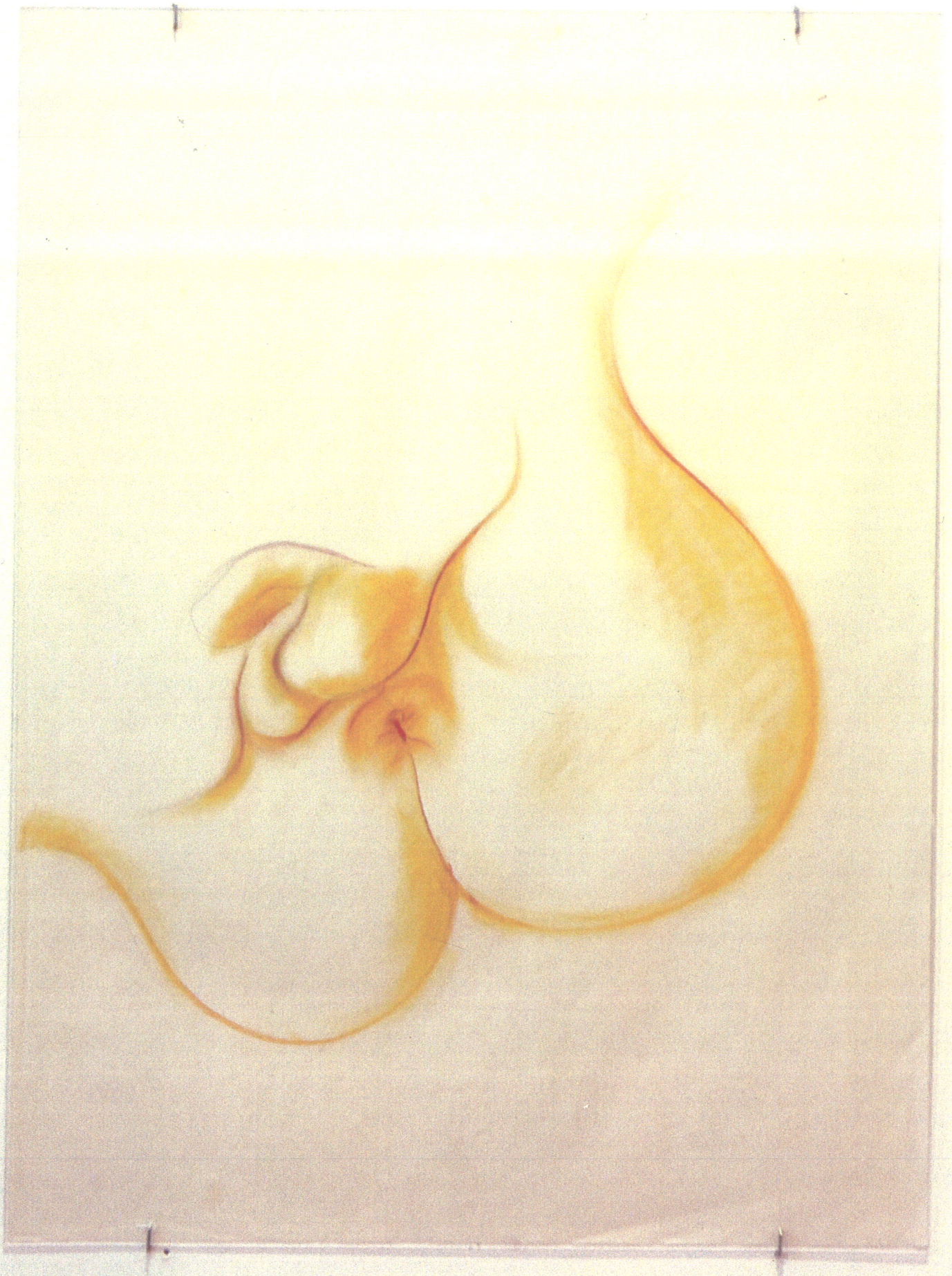
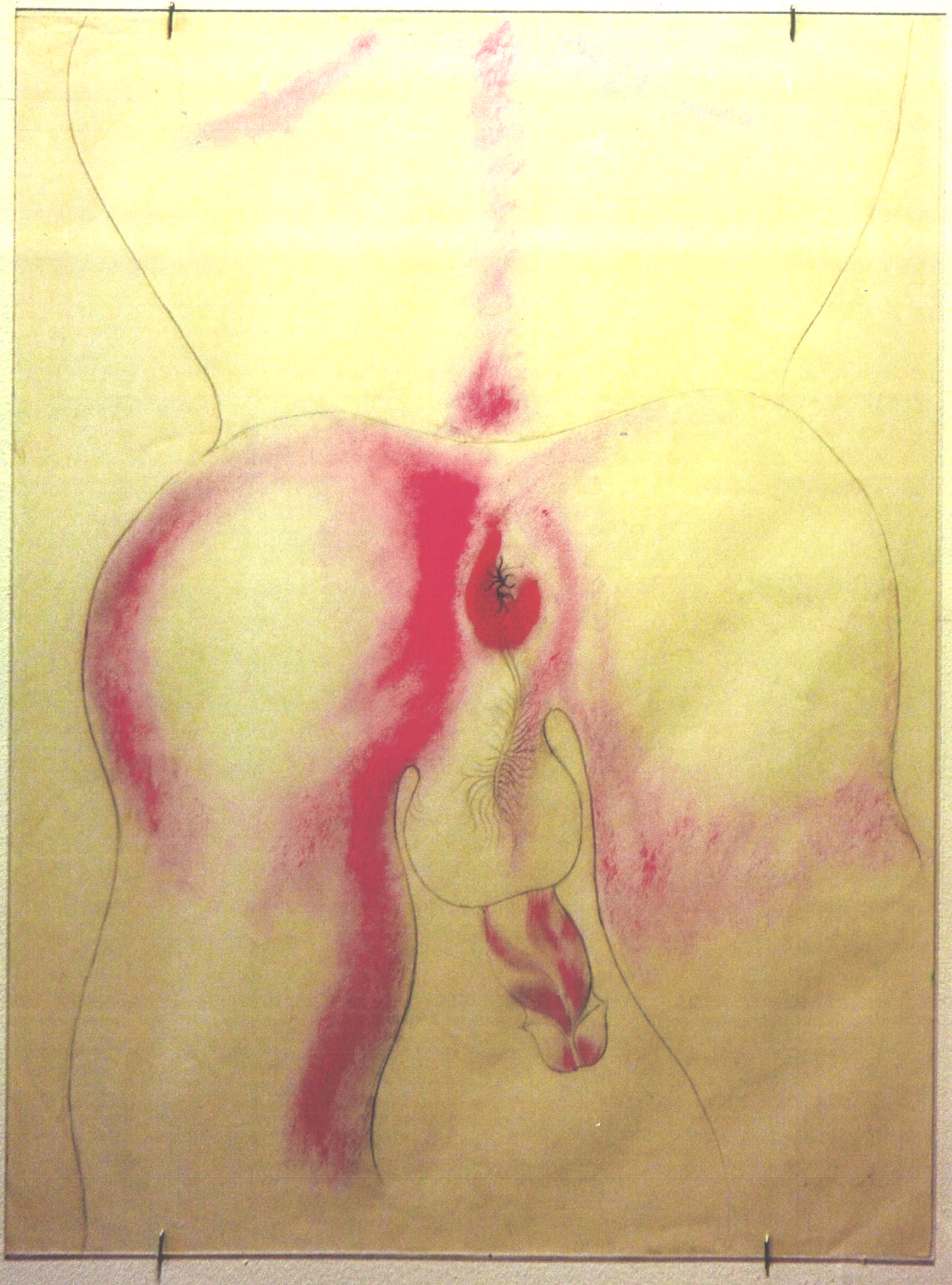


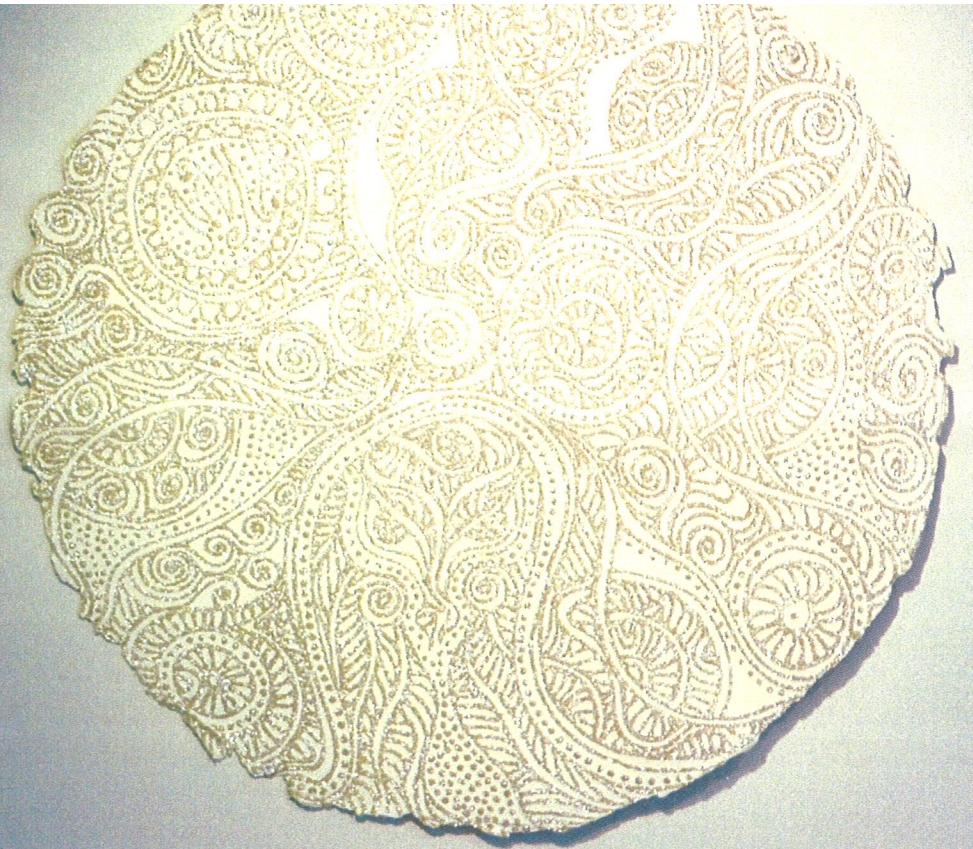
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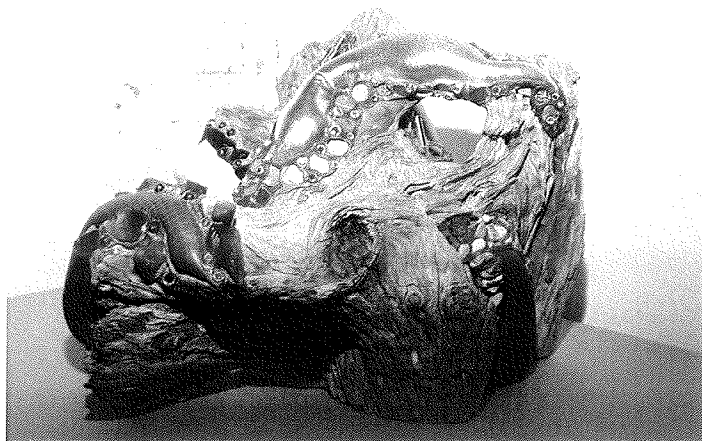
Mixed Media on Paper, 2000



-"Cindy"
"Wandeen"



Christopher Tanner: *Timothy's Bounty*, 2009, paint, sand, mirror and mixed mediums on wood, 15 by 20½ by 6 inches; at Pavel Zoubok.



enacted on the table are mitigated by the prettifying ornamentation.

At Eller, the table itself asserted a motherly presence, in *Kitchen Table Allegory* (2010); a number of the prints, hung on surrounding walls, orbited like children. Its role in “birthing” the monoprints was suggested by the table’s leaves parted like labia to reveal a symbolic vagina at its center: a rustic bowl with a bright red interior.

Couple (2010) presents a hulking plaster form atop a paint-smear sofa, whose cushions sag beneath the weight. The plaster sculpture is abstract and its surface strangely mummified, but it suggests a couple frozen in an embrace, balancing between their faces one of Hutchins’s characteristically misshapen ceramic works, with a mottled, dripping glaze. Messy and grotesque, *Couple* makes no concessions to conventional beauty yet exudes a paradoxical sweetness. In spite of the couple’s seeming disfiguration and dysfunction, their faces are precisely calibrated to stabilize the vessel. This is art that embroils itself in the unwieldy psychology of life and family with a high degree of emotional candor and intellectual sophistication.

—John Motley

CHRISTOPHER TANNER PAVEL ZOUBOK

For the New York-based artist Christopher Tanner—also a set designer, actor and downtown cabaret singer in drag—that old modernist dictum “less is more” has rarely carried much weight. Rather, his motivating mantra has long been “more is more.” Over the years, Tanner’s esthetic outlook

and art-making efforts have focused on the value of meticulous craftsmanship, the meaning and nature of glamour, and an unabashed celebration of beauty. More recently, the artist has said, he’s become interested in “succulence, abundance, bounty and the life force that flows through nature and the human body.”

Best known for spectacular, mixed-medium “paintings”—luxurious, canvas-mounted assemblages of such humble materials as big shiny sequins, colored sand, shells, stones and fabric scraps—Tanner is also a capable draftsman who routinely draws from live models, and sinuous lines derived from his drawings often make their way into his compositions in other mediums. Lately, Tanner has taken a break from his brightly colored, thickly encrusted paintings, experimenting instead with more pointedly three-dimensional, wall-mounted and freestanding sculptures.

For some of these variously shaped new pieces (all 2009), presented in “The Queen of Hell & the Horn of Plenty,” his latest solo show, he first made wooden armatures, which he then built up in random patterns using such materials as sand, coins, flat slices of colored stones, chunks of crystals, tiny mirrors and bullets. Among these strange creations: *The Queen of Hell*, with a vixen-red palette, and *Unplanned Visitor*, a stone-and-mirror-studded bundle enveloped by spiky orange tentacles. For *Timothy's Bounty* and *Mystic Wand*, Tanner used pieces of driftwood instead of his usual constructed supports. All of these new works feature stuffed, colored-leather protrusions that emerge like enormous veins

from the irregular surfaces, hugging them tightly. Recalling human arms, breasts or thighs, these sleek, muscular works are both voluptuous and otherworldly.

Tanner also showed a group of collages on sheets of gridded vintage wallpaper samples. Line drawings from his figure studies served as the starting points for *Dirty Martini III* and *Ruby Greta Ruby I*, whose main outlines he rendered in colored sand sprinkled with glitter. Human forms are submerged in swirling eddies of richly patterned serpentine or biomorphic shapes. Like his new sculptures, the works on paper reaffirm an affinity with the Pattern and Decoration movement of the 1970s. In his latest body of work, this always playful, inventive artist shows that he is thinking ever more expansively about the expressive power of abstract art.

—Edward M. Gómez

ALBERT KRESCH LOHIN GEDULD

The very modest size of Albert Kresch’s paintings—of Nova Scotia, Maine, upstate New York and New Mexico—accounts in part, oddly enough, for the impact of their dreamy expansiveness. Often just a foot on their longest side, or even smaller, they are invested not only with a feeling of capacious space but also the temporal dimension of myth. Each of these landscapes is the record of a particular encounter recorded on site, initially in acrylic, then oil; Kresch further develops the scenes in his studio into oneiric imaginings of grandeur. A heartfelt rapport with his chosen locales links him with Albert Pinkham Ryder and Marsden

too community.” In the show she is organizing, Liebowitz says she will “investigate Dr. Lakra’s process, highlighting his sketchbooks in the exhibition catalog and integrating his collections of record albums and comic strips that have influenced his work.”

The Missouri-born, Brooklyn-based artist David Scher is also a prolific maker of drawings. In addition to single sheets, to date he has filled some 1,000 sketchbooks. Scher’s works on paper, which often mix ink with other media, may depict ships, people or plants. Sometimes they suggest otherworldly landscapes in which human figures busy themselves with various tasks or they resemble ectoplasmic explosions or post-combat battlefields littered with fragments of unidentifiable debris. “As a child, I drew and painted constantly,” Scher once told an interviewer. “There are many ways to look at drawing, a medium that has an immediacy that touches the eye—and people like to be touched.” Joe Amrhein, the founder and director of Pierogi, a gallery in Brooklyn, where Scher’s new works are on view through October 9, says, “David is an artist of many talents—music, writing, poetry, drawing, painting, sculpture, even architecture. His drawings sometimes feel like music scores, and many are infused with wit and humor.”

The collage drawings made by Aurora Robson are elegant and clever at the same time; a subtle sense of humor may be found in the Brooklyn-based artist’s recycling, with attention to the details of color, sug-



gested pattern and paper texture, of the printed credit-card solicitations and advertisements she receives in the mail. “I call them my ‘junk-mail collages,’” says the Canadian artist, who is best-known for making sculptures from plastic bottles she “rescues from the waste stream” and paints, cuts up and assembles into futuristic, abstract sculptures. Robson, who also uses inks in her collage works, says, “Anytime you put a pen or pencil to paper, you’re either writing or drawing—even scribbling is a kind of drawing. In my collages, I ‘draw’ with the cut, colored paper.”

From top: Dan Miller, *Untitled (Large Works DM 72)*, 2010; Three mixed media drawings by Christopher Tanner.

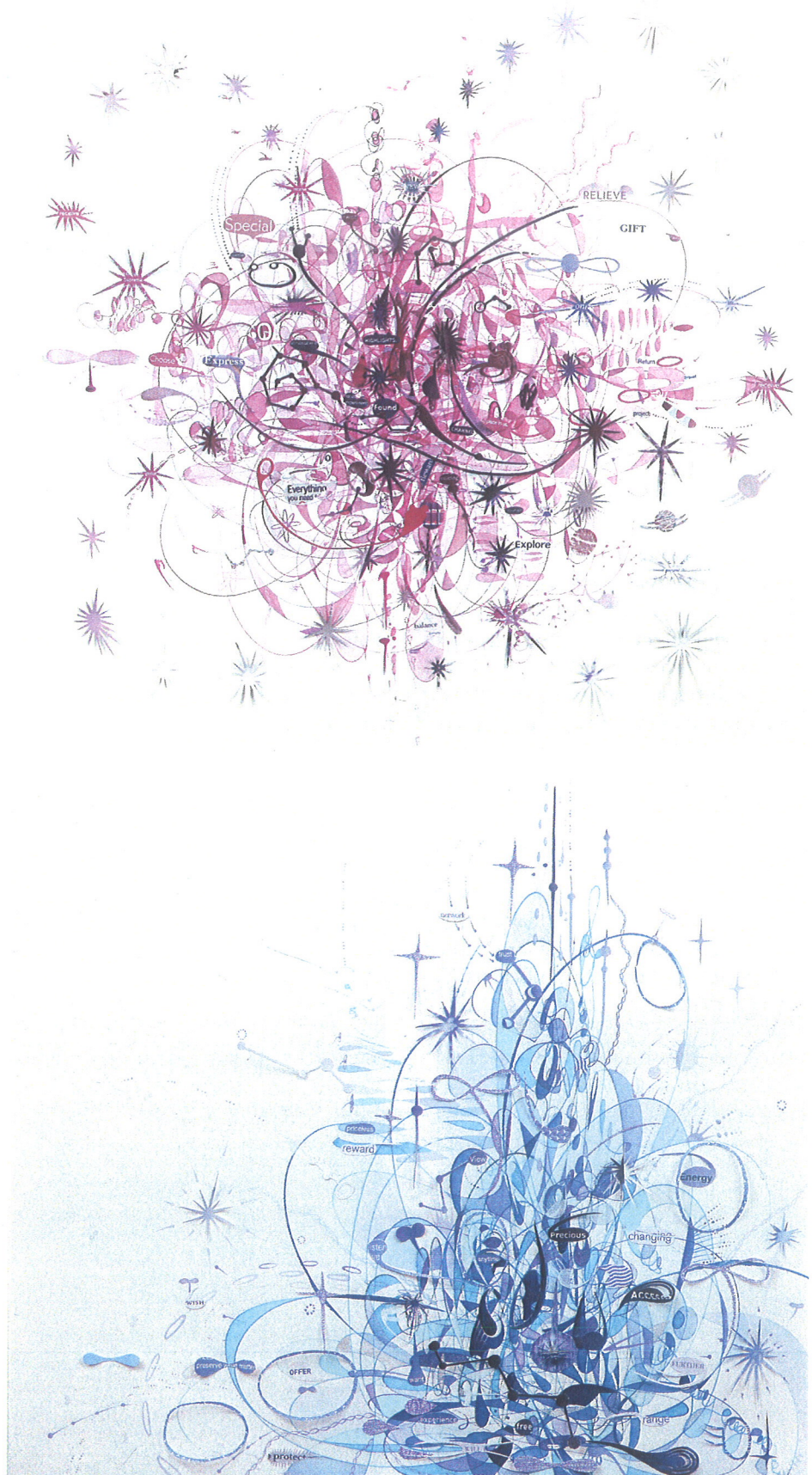


In New York, the artist Christopher Tanner, who has made large-scale, mixed-media assemblage paintings using giant sequins and colored stones to unabashedly celebrate beauty and glamour, has also made drawings using found paper. Tanner says, “I’ve made abstract works derived from figure studies—I still draw from live models—using wallpaper samples from the 1920s as my support surface. I’m intrigued by the mix of textures and patterns in these works, in which recognizable shapes emerge through the dense lines.” In these drawings, Tanner renders some of his sinuous, sensuous forms using colored sand flecked with glitter.

By contrast, the New York-based artist Jon Waldo, who grew up in New England and looks to that region’s folk art and craft traditions for inspiration (and also, at the other extreme, to punk rock), has created works on paper whose motifs are pure Americana—school buses, log cabins, cars and Mr. Magoo. Waldo, whose economical lines define the shapes and suggest the textures of those and other familiar subjects, makes his own stencils based on his drawings. Lately he has used spray paint on brightly painted sheets of paper to make Pop-flavored pictures. “The graphic style I’m inspired by is very 1970s,” says Waldo, “coming from record albums, lettering and posters of that era, and the visual language I’m using to get my ideas across is like sloganeering; it’s quite deliberate.”

These examples show, as the curator Rachel Liebowitz notes, that drawing remains an important part of the practice of many contemporary artists. She adds, “Some use drawing in a traditional way, as a daily exercise and a means to work out ideas, while others are looking to challenge what exactly constitutes a drawing.” Meanwhile, as Amrhein, an artist himself as well as a dealer, sees it, drawings have become increasingly attractive to collectors. Knowledgeable collectors recognize, he says, that “today, many artists, such as Raymond Pettibon, Mark Lombardi, Nicole Eisenman and Dawn Clements, develop their work mainly on paper or have become noticed for their work on paper.”

For many years, Pierogi has featured the Flat Files, a group of self-service, easily accessible drawers filled with works on





Review: Football Head
 Last updated: 06/30/2014



Imagine if Judy Garland produced a musical version of *Oedipus Rex*, and chose as its star a mustachioed bald man in a skittle printed kimono. If you can summon up this twisted yet tantalizing image, you can gain some insight into what it was like attending Chris Tanner's *Football Head: Tales of Shame and Humiliation* at The Club at La MaMa.

Part cabaret, part burlesque show, part Masterpiece Theater, *Football Head* is an invitation into the dark and fabulous brain and past of Chris Tanner. The over the top raconteur takes a page from *David Copperfield* (the book, not the famous illusionist, though Tanner's flamboyant and unapologetic stage presence is as flashy as any magician practicing sleight of hand): he begins with the story of his birth, proudly showing off his head, which is indeed football shaped, and revealing that his misshapen dome was a result of his being born several months premature. This physical oddity, if you will, spirals us into a series of tales from Tanner's formative years, from birth until about age fifteen, all told from a plush, velvet upholstered armchair perched in the center of a small stage with a runway jutting out into the cafe style seating. Swaths of glittery fabric tent us all in, and huge bulbs frame Tanner, giving the appearance that he's sitting in front of a huge vanity. And he's definitely ready for his closeup.

Two back up singers, called "Do-Wop" girls in the program and played brassily by Gina Bonati and Kaylin Lee Clinton, embody the characters and images that swirl through his stories: family, bullies, friends. Oversized paper mache props add a grotesque comedy to the stories and allow the women to also become swans, rainbows, and pirates (oh my!). We see emphasized the things that must have loomed large in Tanner's young psyche: cigarette holders, sky-high bouffants, pink, frilly, dresses, trays of martinis.

The flamboyant Bildungsroman, which takes moments between tales to break into show-tunes, is funny, garish, and over the top. But perhaps most importantly, it isn't an innocuous, safe performance, and Tanner certainly isn't afraid to go into some pretty dark stuff. He is a dangerously impish and charming story teller, and the audience is drawn into his elaborately recreated and reconstructed world. From sweet sixteens, to rape, to war, to prostitution, it is up to us as viewers to decide what the truth is and what may be embellished fiction -- fictions which, in another time, may have allowed a gay man to survive, such as when Tanner tells us an R-rated story that involves an STD and subsequent web of lies to shield his mother from the truth. For Tanner, being young and gay in a bygone era meant being a quick change artist, creating magic out of paper mache.

It's like a therapy session, if Freud had a bedazzler. Tanner is, in a way, both patient and therapist, revealing the dark recesses of his mind and past and attempting to order them, work through them, connect them for us, to help us, and himself, understand how he is who he is today.

Football Head made me laugh, cringe, and sometimes want to cry. Tanner's show, especially as it wickedly helped to kick off Pride Week in the city, reminds me of the "It Gets Better Campaign," which gained popularity in the face of horrific bullying among children and teens. Tanner shows us that indeed it does get better, and part of that means getting to tell your own stories, to "embrace the power of the freakdom," as he says. And then you get to open your piano, sew sequins onto your favorite suit, and create your own world.



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