

MARLBOROUGH CHELSEA

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DOUBLE HAMBURGER DELUXE

John Ahearn | Mike Bouchet | Peter Coffin | Anne Collier | Mark Flood | Guyton\Walker | Rachel Harrison | Alex Katz | Nate Lowman |
Ari Marcopoulos | Tony Matelli | Sam Moyer | Joyce Pensato | Raymond Pettibon | Larry Rivers | Andy Warhol | Martin Wong

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“They say we’re a service economy now--that there are more people selling us hamburgers than making steel and things. So would the huge wall murals of today be of the people sitting at computer terminals and the people at Burger King handing you your fries? Is there any way to make that look heroic?”

Andy Warhol, America, 1985.

In the DIY, punk rock annus horribilus of 1977 Andy Warhol made an appropriately raw and vulgar return to painting with the first of his oxidization or “piss” paintings. This reinvigorated, gestural approach was further inspired by the ascendance of the youthful Neo-Expressionism of Schnabel, Basquiat and Clemente and revived a truly progressive painting practice that had fallen into a rut of rote celebrity portraiture in the early 70s. The artist’s signature silkscreen imagery began to mingle with hand-painted strokes (applied tentatively at first) and then more freely and exuberantly as the hijinks of the Reagan 80s wore on. Religious imagery mingled with butch biker and bodybuilder advertisements—heavenly promise and earthy flesh vying for his soul. And the ever-present gustatory symbol of American appetite, the hamburger—a distillation of our collective promise and banality—became the subject of a number of paintings in the years just prior to Warhol’s death.

This exhibition is built around the most magnificent and painterly example of these works: the nearly 21 foot wide *Double Hamburger* (1985-86), and explores the multivalent ideas and practices that are present in the piece which resonate across the decades to extend their reach to more recent artists in a variety of mediums.

Explorations of text and image [which erupted with complexity through the 1980s, achieved first underground (and then decidedly blue chip) acclaim in the political poetics of Raymond Pettibon—and have seen their ultimate fruition in the continuous stream of the Internet]; the concurrence of mechanical reproduction and hand-painted marks; the friction of abstraction against the deadpan affect of Pop (effectively illustrated in Joyce Pensato’s uninhibited expansion of this methodology); and the fascination with recording, replicating and monumentalizing the banal through sheer repetition as with Martin Wong’s painterly investigation of his beloved Lower East Side architecture.

Artists working today have shrugged off restrictions of distinguishing the handmade for the digitally generated and, taking Warhol’s early example, mix them with impunity. (The collaborative Guyton\Walker explore and question these current technologies while retaining the critical patina of the raw and handmade.) Similarly, through retaining the strictures of silkscreen, Warhol anticipates the coming dominance of photography as the prime locus of theoretical discourse in the latter 1990s and 2000s (Anne Collier’s feminist dissections of photography—using the medium’s own rope to hang it—are a great example) and the extension of the replicant strategies of photo into the third dimension with the perfected (hand-painted!) surfaces of editioned figurative sculptures by the likes of Tony Matelli and John Ahearn. And, of course the ongoing strategy of the non-painted painting (the endless extension of the liberating promise of the piss paintings) that we see so deftly explored here by Sam Moyer) is a hallmark of the super-charged market of this decade.

The market, it comes as no surprise, lends itself to the extra-large, and Warhol’s legacy of the 80s art-boom has trickled down to us now. Scale becomes a factor of expanding studios and exhibition spaces, expanding audiences and wallets. Monumentalism both flexes Ab-Ex muscles and approaches Pop’s billboard-scale aspirations and we see this in the scaled-up power of Ari Marcopoulos and Nate Lowman—one way to take up a position alongside their forebears, and to make a case for a totalizing, enveloping American sublime.

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