



Erik Parker and KAWS

## SITTING PRETTY

by Charlie Finch

Jerry and Roberta (no last names needed, à la Sonny and Cher) made a buff entrance to the joyous opening of the group show "Pretty on the Inside" at Paul Kasmin Gallery last Thursday night. I say "buff" because the critical 2 were in fighting trim, wearing matching black motorcycle outfits, after ripping through Europe like contestants in "The Amazing Race."

The scribbling stars underscored the psychedelic frisson of glorious color brought together by Erik Parker and KAWS, the show's co-curators. Foremost here is the debut of Parker's scintillating flower paintings, such as *Brink*, priced rather high at \$50,000, but so pulsatingly gorgeous as to be almost worth it.



For the more economically minded, **Todd James** provides a room full of gouaches in the \$1,750-\$3,000 range. His naked blondes, which reference Tom Wesselmann with tongue, or penis, in cheek, such as *Mr. Precious* and *No News Is Good News* are a sexy steal. Joyce Pensato, one of the great painters of the last 20 years, whom I just realized is now 70 (gasp!), turns color back into basic black with the brilliant *Here's Lookin at You*, a kind of ghostlike Deputy Dawg face, priced at \$40,000. Other youth-inspired oldsters in the exhibition include Karl Wirsum, whose pieces cross German Expressionism with Kenny Scharf. I especially liked the butch portrait *Throw a Wait Line Proof of Purse Chase* (huh?), at the sale price of \$22,000. There's also Peter Saul's exceptional *Fall of Constantinople*, which reeks of Leger and is priced at the notorious "NFS."

Lastly there's KAWS, not one of my favorites until he co-curated this show, whose black circle *Color Envy* doesn't seem like much for \$45,000, but, when you perceive it as a gleeful satire of the horrible, cynical and commercial Richard Serra black circle excrement at the Met Museum, turns into a sly bit of genius. "Pretty on the Inside" is a misnomer: "Beautiful on the Outside" is all the action you need, at Kasmin, an antidote to the headache inducing mania of the stupidly praised Ryan Trecartin out at MoMA PS1.

"Pretty on the Inside," June 23-Aug. 19, 2011, organized by Erik Parker and KAWS, at Paul Kasmin Gallery, 293 Tenth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10001.

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