

Art & Design

ART IN REVIEW

Bjarne Melgaard: 'The Synthetic Slut: A Novel'

By KEN JOHNSON

In Bjarne Melgaard's case, the road of excess leads not to a palace of wisdom, but to a chaotic theater of psychological conflict.

Paragraphs of colored vinyl words adhered to the floor in the entry hallway introduce Mr. Melgaard's basic issues, which have to do with rough, interracial gay sex and disgust for the art world's sociology. In the showroom proper, it looks as if someone obsessed with fantasies of being sexually dominated by black men has vandalized a metrosexual's chic loft. Leather-upholstered furniture has been attacked with a knife and covered with handwritten racist, sado-masochistic graffiti.

The rest of the room looks as if a small tornado had passed through, leaving only an untouched aquarium stocked with beautiful, live fish. On the walls, large, candy-colored canvases bearing photo-based images of small canines at a dog show have been written on, and they also have crude cartoons, pornographic and otherwise, delineated in thick lines of blobby black paint. Photographs, posters and other ephemera are scattered on the floor. Marble sculptures of primitive human figures with stairs leading to templelike entrances in their backs have been violated by poured paint. This describes only a fraction of the mess.

Viewers who take time to read Mr. Melgaard's hallway text may gather that what he has done is a metaphor for rape, the victim being what he sees as a suffocatingly hypocritical art world. The exhibition is impressively furious but unfocused, and it leaves you wondering: Does Mr. Melgaard have anything more positive to offer?

*Greene Naftali
508 West 26th Street
Chelsea
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