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Art That Makes You Laugh

By Paul Laster

While many folks thing modern and contemporary art – or at least the prices paid for it – is ridiculous, there are some artists who hope that you will laugh along with the absurdity and irony implied by their work. Humor was a prominent trait in the work of the Dadaist, Surrealists, Pop Art artists, and Fluxists, and its still prevalent in the work of the pluralist practitioners active today. The New York exhibition *Knock Knock: Who's There? That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore*, on view at the Upper East Side's Armand Bartos Fine Art through April 9th and Chelsea's Fred Torres Collaborations through April 24, assembles a playful mix of historical and contemporary artworks, which are certain to leave you in stitches.



Organized by Elana Rubinfeld and Sarah Murkett, the show explores three central themes for humorous situations: playful self-portraiture, the body, and man versus nature. Historical

works, dating back to the 1920's, as well as a smattering of contemporary pieces, are exhibited at Bartos, while the mix at Torres consists of works since the 1960's, with the majority of pieces made within the past decade.

Standouts at Bartos include Marc Dennis's amusing paintings of birds thinking of clouds; Sarah Lucas' witty assemblage of a bed base, bucket of cement, pair of suspenders, nylon tights, and an onion; Robert Watts' hilarious *Booger Sizing Chart*; Martha Rosler's feminist photo montage that transforms a woman's body into a surreal smiling face, and Jacob Odonata's fleshy paintings that play with the eyes and breasts in profoundly funny ways.

Highlights at Torres are Richard Prince's politically incorrect joke painting about a silk salesman in Florida; Lee Materazzi's slyly staged photo of a guy entangled in a ladder after falling down steps; Trong Nguyen's funny cake, decorated with the word Redrum, that's reflected in a mirror to spell Murder; David Humphrey's absurdly altered stuffed animals; and David LaChapelle's ironic found family photos, which he manipulated by digitally inserting new, fun-loving members.

With a title that references a Smith's song and a great list of established and emerging artists, *Knock Knock: Who's There? That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore* tickles the funny bone while enchanting the mind and eye.

Art That Makes You Laugh Image Gallery



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Martha Rosler, *Small Wonder*, 1966-72. Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes and Nash



Justin Cooper, *Untitled (Seashells)*, 2006. Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago



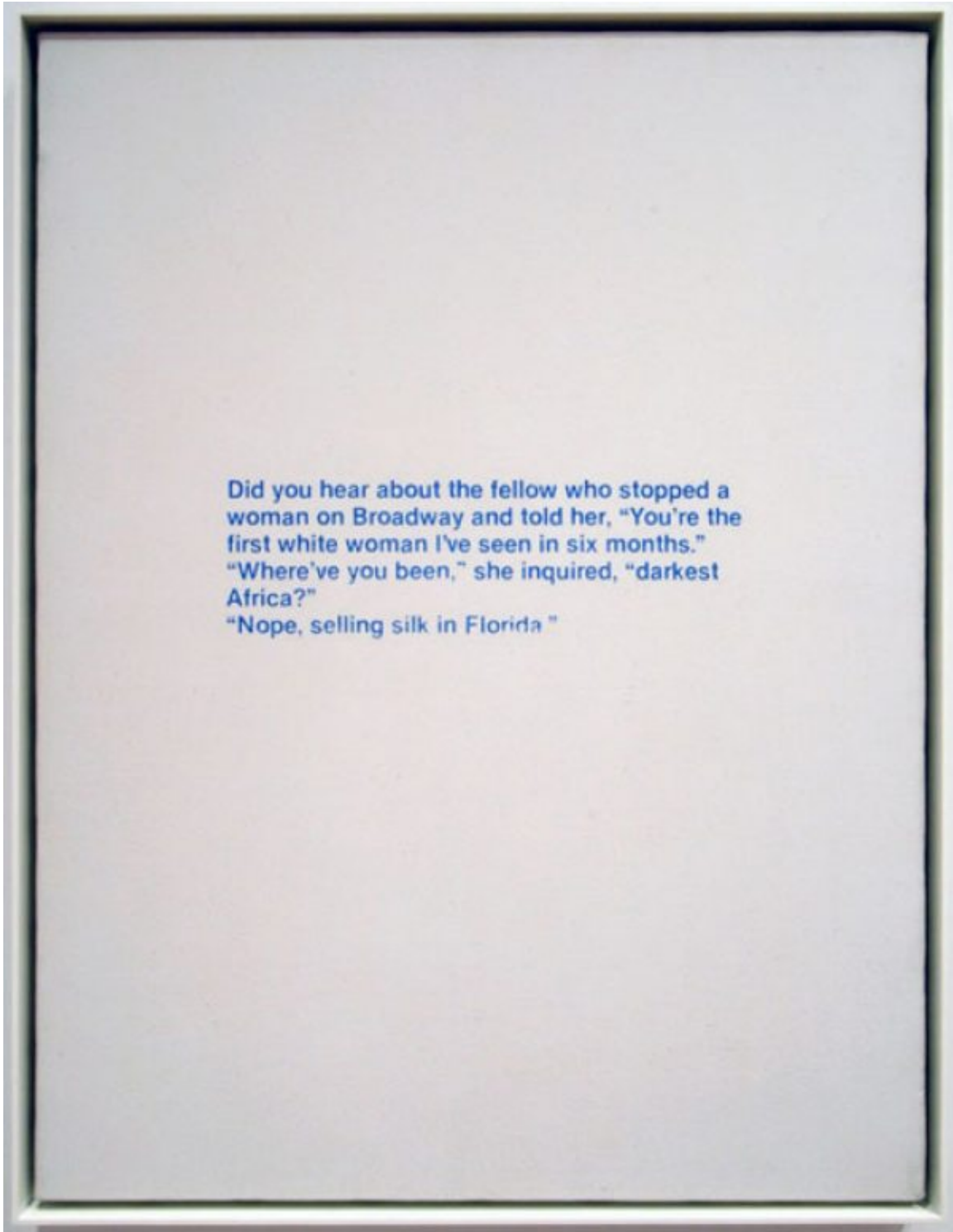
Marc Dennis, *Bird Thinking of a Cloud #12*, 2008. Courtesy of the artist



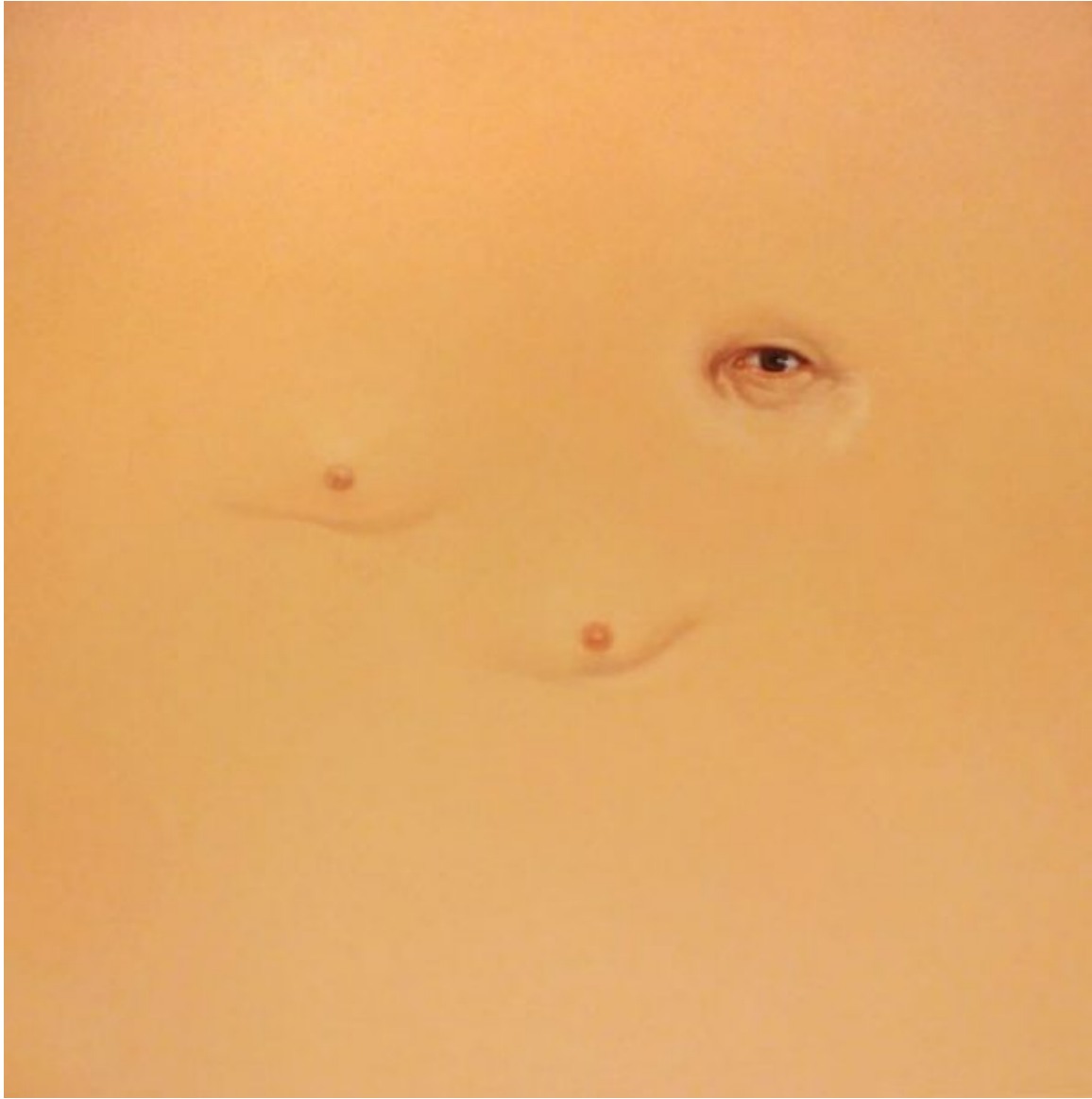
Robert Crumb, *Hannelore's Back*, 1999. Courtesy of the artist, Paul Morris, and David Zwirner Gallery, New York



Armen Eloyan, *A while ago the elephant ordered the ants to make him a burger (1)*, 2009.
Copyright Armen Eloyan; Courtesy of Timothy Taylor Gallery, London



Richard Prince, *Untitled (Silk in Florida)*, 1987. Copyright Richard Prince, image courtesy of Skarstedt Gallery



Jacob Odonata, *Chest Face*, 2008. Courtesy of the artist



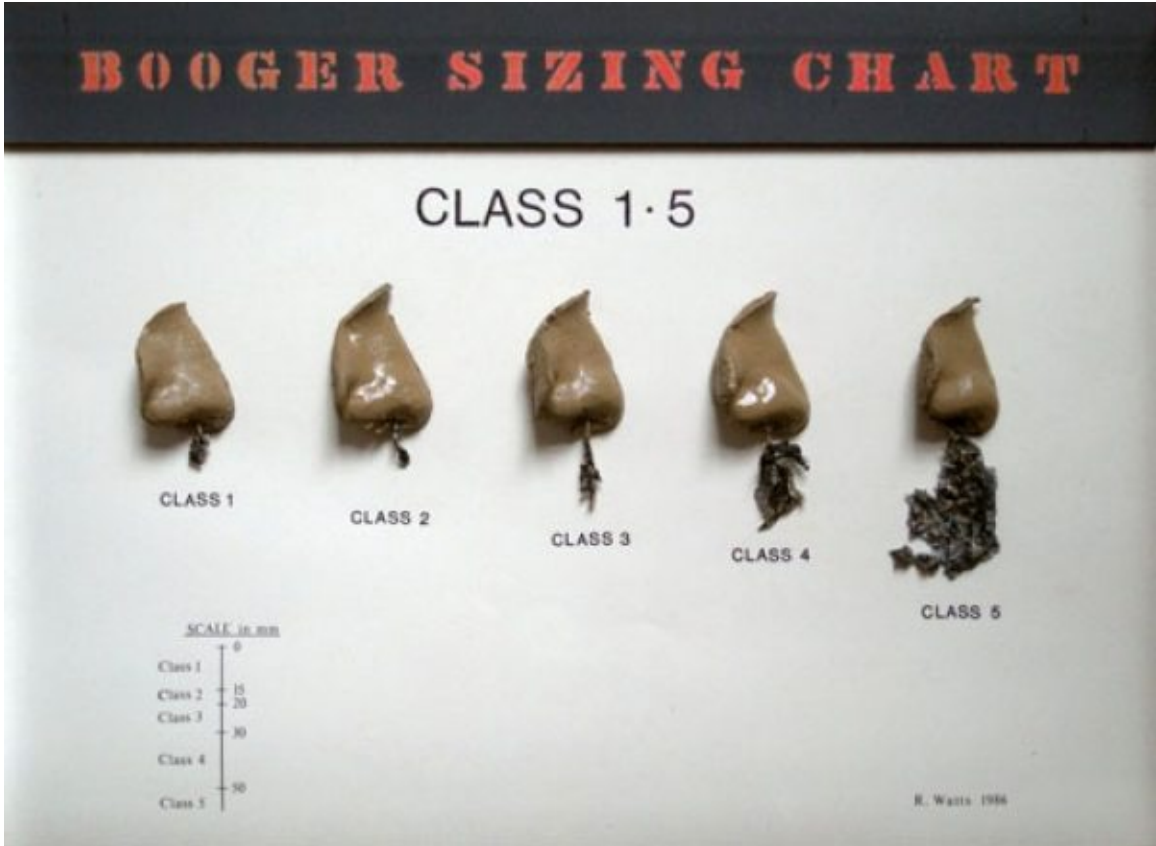
Trong Nguyen, *Redrum*, 2009. Courtesy of the artist



Man Ray, *Object of My Affection*, 1946. Courtesy of Armand Bartos Fine Art, New York



Lee Materazzi, *Ladder*, 2009. Courtesy of Spinello Gallery, Miami



Robert Watts, *Booger Sizing Chart*, 1986. Copyright Robert Watts Estate, 1986/2010



David LaChapelle, *Recollections of America: Double Date*, 2006. Courtesy of the artist and Fred Torres Collaborations, New York