

LUBOV

TWO COATS OF PAINT

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Painting and the anti-Oedipal insurgency

2:26 pm

by Andrew Woolbright

In 1972, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari – a French philosopher and a French psychoanalyst, respectively – published *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. It became something of an intellectual sensation. Among other things, they challenged Freud's focus on the Oedipus complex as an irrepressible source of human aggression and regimentation. Michel Foucault, another French philosopher, saw their ideas as a reaction to the scourge of fascism in the twentieth century – that is, a search for channels that diverted the human attraction to totalitarian control. Deleuze and Guattari's fascination with a nomadic, disassociated self inextricable from nature and the cosmos was, said Foucault, an introduction to a non-fascist life.

This would have been rich fodder for artists in the socio-political ferment of Europe in the 1970s, when longstanding illiberal arrangements and ideas were under attack. So it is now, as fascistic notions of social and political order resurface and percolate worldwide. Against that backdrop, the palpable shift towards interiority and reclusiveness, the auto-erotic, and insidious social architecture in the work of several Lower East Side artists reads as a nod to anti-Oedipal ego death, and a resistance to American fascism.

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Shannon Lucy, *My Signature Act*, 2017, oil on canvas, 18 x 22 inches

In Shannon Cartier Lucy's solo show "Home is a crossword puzzle I can't solve," at Lubov Gallery, a series of brunaille and gray-hued paintings explore small and psychically charged spaces through female bodies. They incorporate the trapped paranoia of the recluse, and seem to signal an intentional withdrawal from society while still mirroring the traumas of the exterior world within the kitchen, the living room, and the bedroom. The work imparts the self-imposed repression of desire, perhaps as an act of protest. In *My Signature Act*, for instance, hands attempt to play the piano while balancing a cup of coffee, a pencil, and a tongue depressor. Ritual self-sterilization is another Cartier Lucy motif: the uncannily deft painting *Naptime* that shows a woman sleeping under a plastic furniture cover that can also be seen on every surface around the house.

Perhaps the most charged painting of her show is *Ruffles and Bells*. Seen from behind, a girl looks out the window of a small room. She is wearing only a ruffled fabric around her waist and bells around her ankles, as if she is a domesticated pet. Her age is indecipherable, but her pigtails suggest infantilization. No violence and sexual trauma is visually indicated, but it seems to be looming, rendering the involuntary voyeurism of the

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viewer especially squalid. The artist may be discreetly condemning misogyny. Certainly a measure of hostility is unmistakable. Although Cartier Lucy usually stops short of explicit trauma and violence, *Our New Home* is a notable exception. It depicts a bowl of goldfish cooking on the open flame of a stove – a jarringly cruel fate for helpless fish that are normally cared for.



Jenna Gribbon, installation view at Fredericks & Freiser in 2019.

Jenna Gribbon's paintings – of scenes she admits indulge personal fetishes and desires – are substantively less opaque than Cartier Lucy's and comparably powerful. In her recent NYC show at Fredericks & Freiser, Gribbon presented paintings that depicted auto-erotic acts in confined spaces, creating what Deleuze and Guattari would call a celibate machine. The gallery became a theater of erotic explorations of power and dominance. But their very isolation makes it anti-Oedipal. She currently has an exhibition of portraits on view at Howard's in Athens, Georgia.

At 17 Essex, a different kind of anti-Oedipal musing emerges in Faina Brodsky's "Privately Owned Public Space." Her drawings explore fragmented sections of building exteriors and interiors, situated in vignettes. In one of the pieces, a spider web appears in the top right corner of the drawing, done in a graphic style that would work for a tattoo. The drawings bring to mind a dreamy stroll in which experiences and sensations

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blend and merge with the self. They are reminiscent of Mike Kelley's Educational Complex – his project of replacing physical with psychic space, leaving blank what cannot be remembered. Referencing public/private spaces such as the marble lobbies of skyscrapers, Brodsky sees them as vivid reminders of the authority and ownership we cannot see or confront, and may therefore choose to reject. Leaving sections of her architectural drawings blank, she suggests that the missing information is purposely withheld or repressed.

The work of all three women reflects the denial of ego and the disruption of power: Cartier Lucy's reclusive mimicry of sadism and self-regulation; Gribbon's fetishization of dominance and submission; and Brodsky's deconstruction of public/private space. Each artist willfully internalizes and dramatizes the trauma and sadism of our current politics, seeking to neutralize it by making it the stuff of controlled games and ritual. It's a start.

"Shannon Cartier Lucy: Home is a crossword puzzle I can't solve," Lubov Gallery, 5 East Broadway, #402, New York, NY. Through March 8, 2020.

"Jenna Gribbon," Howard's, Athens,, GA. Through March 7, 2020.

"Faina Brodsky: Privately Owned Public Space," 17 Essex Street, New York, NY. Through March 29, 2020.

Andrew Paul Woolbright (Chicago, b. 1986) is an artist, gallerist, and writer working in Brooklyn, NY. He is an MFA graduate from the Rhode Island School of Design in Painting and has exhibited with the Ada Gallery, Nancy Margolis, and Coherent in Brussels, BE. His work has been reviewed in Two Coats of Paint, The Boston Globe, The Chicago Reader, and The Providence Journal and is currently in the collection of the RISD Museum. He is the founder and director of Super Dutchess Gallery located at 53 Orchard Street on the Lower East Side in New York City and currently teaches at SUNY New Paltz.

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