

Monkey Fur: Samantha Simpson's Blog

Making art, looking at art, thinking about art.

SATURDAY, MAY 20, 2006

Rain in New York

I think there's a germ in Chelsea. It's making people weak and sickly, and in their weakened state they are taking their mental cues from their clogged up nasal passages, which make them feel beleaguered and misunderstood. They are becoming cantankerous and, truth be told, a little, well, *demanding*. They want orange juice, and for people to bring them things, and they hate everything. You bring them magazines and chicken soup and they dash it to the floor and yell at you that they have taken a turn to the vegetarian and they want nothing to do with your chicken soup and your middle-class cold remedies. They want *oscillicosenum*, and they want it from France. They hate you and they hate themselves and they wish you would take your pretty smiling face out of there and stop trying to cheer them up. They don't want your damned sunshine and quote unquote *ideas*, they want to sit around watching old Barney Miller and hating every minute of it. It's best to leave them alone at times like this.

Which is to say that a random survey of this month's shows in Chelsea, taken between 2 and 5 yesterday afternoon in a rainstorm revealed a weird preponderance of art that seemed to be infected by a negative nostalgia and little else: there were paintings of family photographs with everyone's eyes gone all red and demonic, and ink pen drawings of mean cheerleaders from the seventies and giant paintings of old Doors album covers made to look stupid, stupid, stupid! I went up to Chelsea last month and saw tons of great stuff, so I'm hoping it's a phase. It feels like one. You can walk through the galleries and hear the art yelling, "I hate you, Dad! And I hate your stupid music and nobody understands me!" But what can you do. Everybody gets a cold sometimes and no one behaves well under the influence of a malicious germ. Plus I hear the rents are going up, which is bound to weaken one's immune system.

There was some great stuff too: I liked the James Lee Bryars and Nicole Eisenman is up to some nice new tricks that are good to see. And there's a funny Basquatch/Dubuffet show at Pace that featured cow paintings. *And there was a really lovely show in the back section of the [CUE Art Foundation](#). Man, that was good. It was work by an artist named Valerie Hammond and it made me wonder what genius curator had picked up her work: it turns out the show was curated by Kiki Smith. Shows ta go you. Valerie Hammond's work is gorgeous and kind and humane and interesting: a marked contrast to the preponderance of superior stuffy-nosed art we saw in a lot of the rest of the galleries. Definitely worth a look- pictures don't convey the beautiful fragility of her pieces.*



Valerie Hammond, *Madill*, 2006
Transfer, pencil and wax on paper, 38" x 25"