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THE ARTS

QUEER ART PICKS

Taboo-shattering video, fantasy mothers, '70s lesbian feminists, and much more.

By [Rafael Risemberg](#)
Thursday, March 06, 2008

All of the artists whose exhibits are described below are gay or lesbian.

Bjarne Melgaard

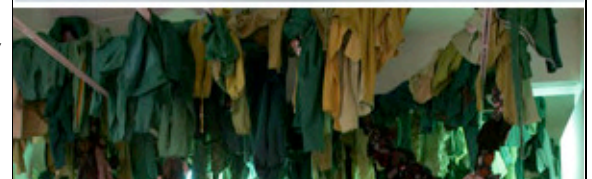
Always the provocateur—and an enigmatic one at that—Australian artist Bjarne Melgaard has put together a sprawling exhibit of large garish paintings, print-covered furniture, and one video. The figures in these works revisit prior themes, including pigs with runny snouts, prone skinny men and pink elephants, while introducing new bizarre characters such as the Gay Mafia, Cock Monsters, and Snuff Sluts. But it is Melgaard's appropriated video, tucked away in a side room, that is the most controversial piece of art I've seen in years, or perhaps ever (the action in the video is unprintable even in this queer publication). For those who value the gay artist's role in pushing the envelope of society's taboos, no matter how disturbing, this video is a must-see. And kudos to the gallery for having the guts to display this work during our seemingly endless conservative era. *10 a.m.–6 p.m., Tues.–Sat., until March 15, Greene Naftali Gallery: 508 W. 26th St., 8th Fl., near 10th Ave., [greenenaftaligallery.com](#), 212-463-7770.*

Manuel Pardo

Just after the Cuban revolution, Manuel Pardo was evacuated to the United States, unaccompanied, at the age of eight. Though reunited with his mother three years later, to this day that critical maternal separation seems to dominate his artwork. The bulk of the paintings and drawings in his current show feature glamorized versions of his mother, Latina and sexy, dressed in outfits that evoke the 1950s, the artist's formative years. Pardo's use of the rare "Stardust" Japanese archival ink adds a lovely glitter to the works on paper. But sometimes it's the little touches that are the most intriguing, such as several pendants his mother figures wear that show a woman (not his mother) performing fellatio on a condom-clad penis. *11 a.m.–6 p.m., Tues.–Sat., until March 22, Lesley Heller Gallery: 16 E. 77th St. near Madison Ave., [lesleyheller.com](#), 212-410-6120.*

"WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution"

"WACK!"—arriving in Queens from its Los Angeles debut—shows feminist artworks from 1965–1980. Needless to say, several of the artists are lesbian. Louise Fishman's 27 works on paper, titled "Angry Bertha," "Angry Phyllis," etc., full of her characteristic abstract expressionist strokes, take up almost an entire wall. A Joan Snyder acrylic painting sports flock (a fuzzy pink material) at the navel of her abstracted female figure. "An Oral Herstory



of Lesbianism,” by Arienne Ravin, consists of 50 slides of a women’s performance art piece from 1979. Tee Corinne’s “Cunt Coloring Book” is a set of explicit illustrations from 1975 (unfortunately, the book is closed, so we see only samples). Most compelling to me are Barbara Hammer’s six video works that include “Superdyke” (1975), in which 10 women carrying Amazon shields race through town rescuing ladies in distress. *Noon–6 p.m., Thur.–Mon., until May 12, P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, 22-25 Jackson Ave. at 46th Ave., Long Island City, ps1.org, 718-784-2084.*

Guerra de la Paz

Life partners Alain Guera and Neraldo de la Paz go by the name Guerra de la Paz when collaborating on art projects, such as their recently opened exhibit in Chelsea. The central piece is a huge installation of a forest, made entirely out of used clothes that the artists salvaged from landfills and flea markets. Though meant to evoke lushness and shelter, it projects a sinister ambience (and faint junkyard smell) as well. Echoing this theme of danger versus safety is a nearby wall sculpture of a crucified figure made of recycled camouflage clothing. The implication of war, particularly in the Middle East, is unmistakable. And the ambiguity adds to the interest: Just who is this subject? A U.S. soldier? An Iraqi? American principles? *11 a.m.–6 p.m. Tues.–Sat., until March 22, Daneyal Mahmood Gallery: 511 W. 25th St. (3rd Fl.) near 10th Ave, daneyalmahmood.com, 212-675-2966.*

Bruce Yonemoto

Japanese-American artist Bruce Yonemoto conflates the Antebellum South with Asia in his staged photographic portraits of U.S. Civil War soldiers. His models, you see, are young men descended from the Far East (China, Japan, Korea, etc.). They wear period uniforms rented from the same Hollywood costume agency that outfitted some of the film industry’s most legendary Civil War pictures, including “Gone With the Wind,” so the work functions as a lens on how Hollywood helped shape American history. Yonemoto also calls attention to concerns of identity and of the American character. And if all of that weren’t enough, homoerotic and fetish undercurrents permeate from all of the men in uniform. It’s a lot to ponder for something that at first seems straightforward. *10 a.m.–6 p.m., Tues.–Sat., until March 15, Alexander Gray Associates, 526 W. 26th St. (10th Fl.) near 10th Ave., alexandergray.com, 212-399-2636.*

Rafael Risemberg, Ph.D., leads gay & lesbian art gallery tours through New York Gallery Tours: nygallerytours.com, 212-946-1548. The next LGBT gallery tours start 1 p.m., Saturday, March 15 and April 12, at 526 W. 26th St. near 10th Ave.

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From top: Bruce Yonemoto’s ‘Untitled (NSEW 4),’ 2007, digital print, 24 by 18 inches. Manuel Pardo’s ‘Mother & I in Technicolor Oval #1,’ 2007, oil on panel, 24 by 16 inches; photo: Greg Drasler. Guerra de la Paz’s ‘Green Zone,’ 2008, used-clothing installation at Daneyal Mahmood Gallery.

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