

Related Events:

All events are free and open to the public.

Exhibition Reception:

Sunday October 29, 5 - 8 pm

Tour with the Curators and Artist:

Sunday, November 6, 3 pm

About the Artist:

Early in his career **Keith Herzik** studied with cartoonist Peter Saul at the University of Texas at Austin, where he earned a BFA. Since 2001, he has created numerous punk-rock posters, cover art for records and CDs, and is a prolific publisher of handmade artist books, zines, and other publications. With a brazen approach to screen printing, he breaks all of the traditional rules of the medium, while still being well-crafted. Herzik's day glow prints maintain an immediate approach to drawing; wavey, messy lines and jarring color schemes provide the unique, informal qualities that have become a hallmark of Herzik's work. Many publications have featured his work including The Baffler, Lumpen magazine and the Chicago Reader, where he created illustrations for the Gossip Wolf column.

About the Curators:

Chris Kerr and Paul Nudd are Chicago area-based artists and teachers who exhibit their work locally, nationally and internationally. Since 2007, the artists have worked jointly on projects, including a series of silkscreen prints and the creation of a catalogue for the exhibition *KlusterCrusts* at the Butcher Shop gallery in Chicago. The two concurrent exhibition at the Art Center, *Keith Herzik* and *Blaque Lyte*, mark the curatorial debut of Nudd and Kerr have working together.

The curators wish to express their enormous gratitude to Keith Herzik, Gina Eccher, Nick Drnaso, Kevin Budnik, and Nick Black for their kind assistance in the assembly of this exhibition.

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

5020 South Cornell Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60615 773.324.5520 www.hydeparkart.org

The Hyde Park Art Center is at once an exhibition space, learning annex, community resource, and social hub for the art curious and professional artists alike — carrying out its mission to stimulate and sustain the visual arts in Chicago. The Art Center is funded in part by the: Alphawood Foundation; Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts; Chicago Community Trust; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events; David C. and Sarajean Ruttenberg Arts Foundation; Field Foundation of Illinois; Harper Court Arts Council; Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Irving Harris Foundation; Joyce Foundation; Leo S. Guthman Fund; Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; National Endowment for the Arts; Polk Bros. Foundation; Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust; and the generosity of its members and people like you. The Hyde Park Art Center does not discriminate against any person for reason of race, gender, age, place of national origin, handicap, religious conviction, marital status, veteran status or sexual preference.

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

Gallery 2

October 2, 2011 - January 9, 2012

Keith Herzik: *There Are Still Lofty Dreams, Meager Desires And Still Silliness*

Curated by Chris Kerr and Paul Nudd



Installation detail

Entrails of the Senile Saint *

by Bert Stabler

The first time I saw work by the Providence upstarts then known only by the name of their communal live/art space, Fort Thunder—guys like Ben Jones and Leif Goldberg, who ended up as founding members of Forcefield, Paper Rad, etc. – it was at a huge rock poster show put on at Chicago’s Butcher Shop in 1999. Their posters were expressionistic, but exquisitely detailed and highly crafted; they were known for having far more color separations in their silkscreen prints than anyone else in the show. They were more pretty than weird then. The crest of acclaim that buoyed that gang in the ‘oughts followed the arc of many frisky artists brought to heel by MFA degrees and attention from the Whitney Biennial—visionary anarchism whittled down to a few key motifs (diamonds, peace signs, weird dog heads, Gumby) and a trademark style (day-glo colors, seizure-strobe animations).

And I also saw Keith Herzik’s art for the first time in that Butcher Shop show. Keith’s work, on the other hand, had the mind-blowing audacity of the apparently feeble-minded; the trembling outlines of one little piece featured a toilet sitting on the lap of a large naked person, with a cutaway view to a pack of cigarettes rotting in their stomach. And yet, other artists treated Keith as the unsung celebrity of an incredibly comprehensive and star-studded survey exhibit. His posters were, compared to most of the art in that show, not especially offensive, clever, ornate, or vivid. Rather, like the musical output of Syd Barrett, they were gentle koans of incomparably absurd perfection.

Keith and the Providence dudes have had an ongoing artistic relationship, so the comparison isn’t shocking. Among other things, he contributed work to their stellar comics periodical *Paper Rodeo* back in the gay ‘90s. Since that time, the dudes have made the compromises necessary to become collectible cultural content, somewhat to their detriment, and Keith, well, he just hasn’t. Drawings that look like something David Crosby would have drawn with a pen in his mouth during a sentimental bout of flashback-induced somnambulism melt and wobble next to hysterically mundane sound bites, the same today as they did a decade ago. But his production values have advanced tremendously. The ecstatic drawings are scattered and stacked in delicate arrangements of ink separations that don’t belie the spontaneity of the epileptic doodling, but make it leap off the page in a joyful storm.



Keith Herzik, *Ouch!*, 1998, silkscreen on paper, 15 x 11 inches

His posters, once merely loopy, hilarious, and bizarre, have become retinagling tableaux of feverish shapes, harmonious chromatic energy, and enigmatic cultural bloopers. Herzik learned everything there was to learn from alterna-comics oracle Gary Panter, except how to try to age gracefully via obnoxious literary pretensions.



Keith Herzik, *Micro-Chipped Cat Scan at the Airport*, 2004, silkscreen on paper, 10 x 13 inches

The sense of fragmentation is unavoidable in Herzik’s work, as images drift in and out of discernibility. In the small fully-screenprinted booklets he’s been making of late, under the aegis of “Alamo Igloo,” the format implies a narrative. Words appear now and then, there are a few recognizable and repeated images (dogs, astronauts with guns, sexy girls, etc.), but mostly the images dissolve into musical shapes and patterns, recalling the synesthetic synthesis of the arts that was one of Modernism’s nobler aims. In *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Wassily Kandinsky comments that “a first encounter with any new phenomenon exercises immediately an impression on the soul.” The effect is similarly immediate in Keith’s art, no hesitation in his eternally newborn overflow of sensations. Working tirelessly, never neglecting his handicraft, Herzik attempts to recreate the assault on the nervous system of a universe too strange to reproduce with detachment.

Keith is not a romantic narcissist—the impression from seeing the work is classically sublime, one of being overwhelmed and absorbed by reality, “to the point where one no longer sees forms or even matters,” (quoting Deleuze commentator Daniel W. Smith) “but only forces, densities, intensities; the forces of folding in a mountain, the forces of germination in an apple, the thermal and magnetic forces of a landscape.” Vitalistic and demented, elegant and incoherent, immersive and marginal, these are pieces at which you stare like blinding headlights, and then stumble away from, forgetting everything but the floating spots briefly burned into your imaginations.

*This essay was originally written for the release of *Keith Herzik: Inside the Alamo Igloo* (2009), a short documentary film created by Paul Nudd.