

ARTFORUM

Margie Schnibbe

CIRCUS GALLERY

7065 Lexington Avenue

May 17–June 14

Artist Margie Schnibbe is more widely known to her audiences as Vena Virago, alt-porn director of skin flicks with a critical edge such as *Eastside Story* (2007) and *Silverlake Scenesters* (2006), the latter of which includes the mockumentary segment "Nietzsche Bangers" ("inspired by the texts of Friederich Nietzsche"). Schnibbe and Virago meet where art and pornography inform and comment on each other, fertile ground where Vito Acconci, Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Bruce LaBruce, and others have come before. A 1998 graduate of CalArts, Schnibbe insists on pornography as political performance and winks knowingly at the camera, couching hardcore sex in terms of what she calls "post feminist pornography beyond the pleasure principle." Her sustained practice of palpating the soft seam between art and porn makes Circus Gallery—itsself housed in an old porn-distribution warehouse—the ideal location for "Honey Bunny," her first solo exhibition in LA. Installations of her drawings, paintings, ad hoc wallpaper, zines, and fabric pieces double as the multiple sets for her newest adult feature. Using pornography as an ingenious means of exposure and distribution, Schnibbe maintains that "adult films are a way to support and display my art." By the same token, filming sex in the gallery eroticizes it and plunges the libidinal body into art with a bang.

Currently in production, *Honey Bunny* is an XXX-rated fairy tale with an allegorical subtext that stalks a Playboy Bunny manqué as she journeys through dreamlike scenarios, getting fucked all along the way. A cushy velour sofa and a glut of throw pillows upholstered in girly pinks, purples, creams, and faux cowhide beckon invitingly in front of a bright yellow wall emblazoned with a large fringed felt sign reading TODAY IS A GOOD DAY, each word burrowed into its own pink rabbit hole. Across the gallery is *The Birthday Party: The Women of the AVN Hall of Fame*, 2008, Schnibbe's purple "tribute wall" of 112 ink drawings that is both an homage to a sisterhood of famed sex bunnies and a spoof on the feminist roll call of Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*, 1974–79. It is the set for a girl-on-girl S/M scene in the video. That which initially seems cheerful, cuddly, and happy takes on an ominous aspect up close, notably in the numerous childlike depictions of creepy and crazed rabbits illustrating the neurosis, guilt, shame, insecurity, and trauma latent in sexual drives. In one text painting, a purple bunny sniffs a floating carrot phallus in an enactment of the DEATH DRIVE. Walking through the gallery-as-empty porn set, the body is repeatedly felt in its eerie absence, a conspicuous void within each installation's vacant couch, table, chair, or bed.

— Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer



Today Is a Good Day, 2008, fabric, thread, paper, and acrylic foam, 12' x 8' x 8'.