



Margie Schnibbe, "Death Drive," installation view, 2008

MARGIE SCHNIBBE
Circus Gallery

THE DELIBERATELY COY TITLE for Margie Schnibbe's show, "Honey Bunny," belied its philosophically freighted and darkly ambivalent content. For Schnibbe, who, in addition to being an artist, works in both production design and the porn industry as a director of porn movies, philosophy germinates, not in the bedroom, or even the porn sets and motel/brothel rooms that provide aesthetic and thematic inspiration, but the playroom and, conceivably, much earlier — the birth canal, which might be just another vagina dentate in this scheme. In the main gallery, two walls are given over to word (or name) drawings; specifically, porn stars, the names rendered in Schnibbe's faux-naïf child script, floating in bubbles, mostly of densely worked doodles: *The Birthday Party: The Women of the AVN* (as in Adult Video Network) *Hall of Fame*. Here, the names themselves — frequently cloying and almost sickening-sweet (e.g., Bambi Woods, Tabitha Stevens) — make the connection between children's parties and polymorphed/polyestered porn sets. Even the more coyly provocative (Tiffany Mynx, Sydnee Steele) tend to fall on the wrong side of cute.

Nothing is wrong, of course. Fraught, tenuous, troubled by sense/memory of that difficult birth — but nothing that can't be cured — say, by the kinds of "affirmations" ubiquitous in the pandering culture of the early 21st century. Schnibbe compresses that into what might be the remnants of a children's room (or memory), a porn set, or simply the idea of a porn set, the title, *Today Is A Good Day*, descending in black edged pink puffs over the crazy-quilt pillow strewn couch. Schnibbe answers that "affirmation" with *The*

Pornographic Imagination, an abstract hanging in colored fabric cut-outs — teals and whites edged by black and charcoal gray — that evoke distant memories of the sort of cheap graphic patterning that once blanketed suburban decors, while being something quite different — a sort of Leger, Interrupted by Haring — its vasculature of arcs, curves and canals bisected, rough beasties floating, sputtering towards no end at all, except that defined by the hanging's black edges.

Upstairs, the artist showed smaller abstract paintings in matte reds and blacks that were like magnified sections of this hanging, though along more distinctly biomorphic, Arp-like lines, whose titles, more than the paintings themselves, evoked porn settings and "commuter parties" (e.g., *Eastside Story No. 1* and *Scottsdale Holiday No. 2*). A commuter party of sorts might be made in the schizy bordello room set, *For the Love of Amber Vega*, that was something of a companion to the collapsed porn set downstairs — in warm ambers and reds — red satin offset by varicolored knit bolster and macramé chandelier cover. A skein of yarn sitting on the bed underscored the ambivalence. Schnibbe's approach (as noted elsewhere) is both direct and deconstructed. Typography figures prominently in her repertoire, but the set pieces display her broad range. More typically, deliberately emblematic are her word and word/cartoon paintings and drawings, two of which hung alongside the abstractions, including *Make Me Your Friend Not Your Dinner*, a cri de coeur from a place neither hard- nor soft-core. Other drawings downstairs, rendered in a trademark palette of soft pinks and purples — with pasted-on googly eyes — floating teddy bears and bunny rabbits in uterine bubbles — echoed that alienated cry beyond pain or pleasure.

—Ezra Jean Black