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RITA ACKERMANN

Peter Kilchmann

Zurich

Though Rita Ackermann surely must have titled her show of new drawings in part as provocation, "The Only Way to Get to My Vagina Is Through Jesus" did embody a powerful mix of religious themes and unflinching realism in these drawings.

Most of the subject matter was fantastical, inspired by William Blake's illustrated poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. In one image, a lamb suckles at a woman's breast while her child strokes the animal's neck and angels beatifically guard them from a squadron of wild-eyed succubi. *The Voice of the Devil* (M of H&H) depicts a chorus line of nude women offering infants to men with boar's heads and flames surrounding them.

Not all the drawings were as nightmarish. For the Hungarian-born artist, who recently moved from New York to Texas, bourgeois American life has its bizarre qualities. In *American Woman I*, female parishioners are asleep in their church pews with boulders on their laps or bricks on their shoulders. *The Art of Cleaning* shows a woman, dressed in a pinstripe suit and chef's hat, serenely forming a pyre of her domestic wares.

With the exception of a nine-foot-tall drawing, all works were torn from Ackermann's sketch pad; one even had a coffee stain on its corner. This casual presentation proved surprisingly effective. As paintings, much of this imagery would have seemed Grand Guignol, but the lightness of pencil and the informality of the format kept these surreal scenes lean and strong.

Marc Spiegler