

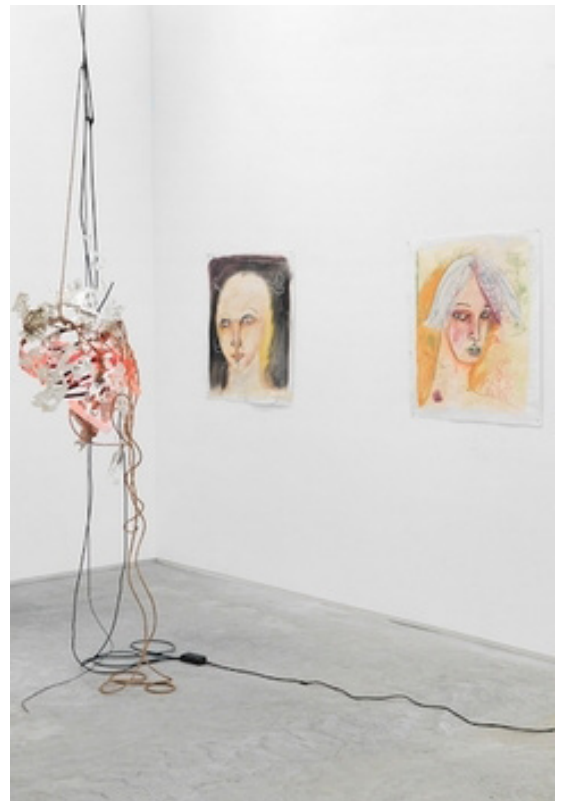
ARTFORUM

“These Are Not My Horses” at James Fuentes

by Tobi Haslett
June 2015

It’s a mirthless irony of our time that the demise of civilization lies in the hands of a few puttering functionaries. So there’s something procedural, something grimly determinate, about the patent insanity of this show. Rochelle Goldberg’s glazed clay fragments sit like clenched guts on a strip of white carpeting, smeared with crude oil and chia seeds, the latter spread evenly on surfaces, mapped methodically on the white fuzz. Chaos inheres within structure and shoots to allegorical heights with Robert Bittenbender’s *Broadway Nights, 2015*, a lattice of twine, cheap bracelets, and chintzy debris, brought together in a preposterous kind of order. It dangles from the ceiling. Cells, grids, matrices—the pieces all click into a conspiracy of organization, with Win McCarthy’s *Sunday Afternoon at 5CR, 2015*, plunking the show’s most literal note: Rocks with collaged faces stare out from a metal cage, their two-dimensional features locked in a box.

But we have to laugh. Polish painter Jakub Julian Ziolkowski has contributed five canvases to this exhibition, all of them crossing the plump figurations of Philip Guston with a crazed, cackling style. The painting that greets visitors at the gallery’s entrance is of a bleeding, self-flagellating body in a crown of thorns—the title, of course, is *Fanatic, 2011*. But even the skinned flesh is patterned, regulated, and the exposed muscle devolves into striations and stripes. Reason reigns, even as violence slops over the sides. A James Ensor etching, *L’Ange exterminateur, 1889*, hangs quietly in the far corner, the nineteenth-century outlier that, perhaps, sums up this whole shambling gang of deranged pieces. Ensor’s angel gallops across the sky, brandishing his sword, as a row of men crouch, performing an act that carries with it all the inevitability and regularity and filth that attend this fearful, apocalyptic age. They are shitting themselves.



View of “These Are Not My Horses,” 2015.