

# schmick contemporary

# porkDestroyer

alex **LATHAM** sam **FRANK**

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Contemporary galleries are haunted houses.

You hang out too long pretending to pretend to be moved by official gallery culture and you'll eventually drop out and move back in with mum and start having fun with painting again.

Alex's body of work feels like leering ghouls on a ride at the Easter Show - stuff infants are barely scared of. Contemporary galleries operate on a similar feigned effect. Artists and audiences pretending to be moved - or pretending to pretend - by art, which is symptomatic of a cynicism that is perhaps more pervasive than we're able to acknowledge.

For artists exhibiting in haunted houses there is nothing left to do, nothing left to say. This can be framed in Hegelian terms around the notion of circular history, that all events are leading to a point of absolute knowing. Hegel applied this science to artistic production and saw that different modes of expression are particularly well suited to different epochs due to the developing relation between form and content. For him, this historical process culminated in Romantic literature. The most pressing and inconclusive question for Hegelian philosophy is the status of absolute knowing, toward which all historical events converge: does history stop, does it start again, or do we enter a new circle of history? The first of these solutions was taken up through Kojève's claim to the 'end of history', which asserts that nothing else is left to be done, nothing left to say, we've achieved absolute knowing and the end of art, but we haven't even noticed yet. The postulate of the end of history - which artists exhibiting in

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haunted houses unwittingly swallow - leads to two central responses a) ram disparate themes together and expect the audience to make sense of it (and if they don't then they're philistines), or b) reflect on their own identities and expect the audience to find it interesting (and if they don't then they're bigots). Kojève saw in post-war Japan that despite historical development ending, people still did stuff, like arranging flowers and serving tea, succumbing to what he called 'snobbery'. Snobs are not the aristocratic snout-gazers, but those who still act as *if* there were anything left to do, anything left to say. This of course rests upon the postulate of the end of history that there isn't anything left to do, nothing left to say. And it is this postulate that needs to be properly undermined in order to make sense of a critique of the spectre that is haunting contemporary artistic production.

Xi said that liberal democratic artistic production is like a 'groan-without-illness', acting only as *if* our actions still contributed to historical development and assert the absolute legitimacy of now, resigning ourselves to the current conditions of experience. We ought to reject this Whig historical claim that liberal democracy is the 'best' political framework, like Fukiyama's facetious reading of Kojève asserts, as if all its inequalities and exploitation were just some nuts and bolts that needed to be tightened to make its edifice sparkle. It's rotten to the core. Similar is the idea that personal expression is the way that art works.

Alex's stuff here are maybe like when the cutout ghouls have fallen off the wall and someone actually gets frightened for a moment - like when that family went up in flames in an escape room, for fucks sake.

**~ William Bennett**

If we are going to fight the war on terror, a good place to start would be our country's haunted houses.

**~ Norm McDonald**

Before writing this, I read William Bennett's essay, where he wrote about galleries being dead—referring to them as haunted houses. I think a haunted house is a thrilling place; actors and animatronics a spectacle designed to awe.

"Pork Destroyer" sounds like a comical way to ascribe a weapon against cops, like something from the first mad max film. In some ways it is like that; raw, rough, and ready, but with a clean attitude for the presentation of two people's works.

Latham and Frank's works come together as a Jake and Dinos Chapman-like partnership, a humorous presentation of bizarre gospel. Sam's work is an inward demonstration of the subject, like how a diorama is framed. Alex's work presents outward in three-dimensional collage, like his pop-cultural subjects.

Ultimately, "Pork Destroyer" presents as this dark spectacle - alike a haunted house, where in the works burn like a flame on a candle at both ends in a dark room.

**~ Joseph Christie Evans**

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