

Thursday, June 7th, 2018

Featured item from THE LIST: Don Perlis at the National Academy Museum

by David Cohen

Don Perlis: *Trumpworld* at National Academy Museum – 1083 5th Avenue @ 89, New York, NY (212) 369-4880 – April 20 to June 14



From the series, *Trumpworld* by Don Perlis, 2018

The all-too thin silver lining of the billowing dark political clouds is the burgeoning artistic take on this weird moment. Although the true Goya or Daumier of 45 has yet to assert him or herself, there are contenders: artcritical/The Review Panel has acknowledged Judith Bernstein, Peter Saul, Mira Schor and others. Don Perlis, who has a gem of a show at the National Academy Museum through June 14, is an intriguing addition to this roster. His “Trumpworld” is disconcertingly benign, a long way from the *Dream and Lie of Franco* territory of ubiquitous politicized iconography. In place of overt satirical bite there’s something more akin to saccharine slobber in these almost commedia dell’arte visions of Times Square bacchanals. In a touch that recalls Reginald Marsh and George Bellows, Perlis renders dystopia with nostalgic serenity. But it’s arguably more sinister to see Trump’s visage sinking into the corporate and all-too-human continuum of diversions and foibles than to indulge in foaming at the mouth bestiarials. While the show includes tour de force painting machines, some of the finer works here are amplifications, in vignette, of isolated incidents in the grander scenes, like this skirmish between competing wonder women with the president looking on. Perlis taps humor and humanity as a way to survive the nightmare while sticking to a larger message: Stay angry.

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