

Frankenstein's monster and open to inspection, like a modern-day Elephant Man destined for a mad professor's cabinet of curiosities.

Schutz's black humour is part of what makes her paintings charming rather than mean. *Headless Dog Living*, for instance, is a portrait of a brown Labrador, apparently healthy, though in place of his head he has only a truncated neck, dripping blood, leaving his spinal cord visible. His leash, with no head to secure it, has fallen and lies coiled near his feet. Flowers spring from the grass nearby, as gleefully as the dog's tail curls with canine innocence. Schutz's treatment of the animal creates a vision of violence no more harmful than when Tom or Jerry sustains an injury, or, to quote Schutz's generation, when Itchy and Scratchy inflict each other's wounds. Since violence is inconsequential, pain and emotion, too, are negligible. Even her depiction of her own elderly landlord, played on the ground after a bad fall, seems forgivably vengeful.

Men's Retreat is her most explicit and piercing caricature. Against a

leafy background, she depicts CEOs in the unlikely scenario of participating in a wilderness team-building retreat. Bill Gates and Ted Turner, among others, are performing a montage of new-age corporate trust-building exercises: painting each other's faces, guiding each other on blindfolded walks, and playing bongos. Naked men on piggyback crouch in the background like monkeys. Though they don't necessarily seem to be enjoying themselves, they clearly don't have the independence of mind or presence of body to protest. The message is obvious: corporate culture is a farce in which the blind are perpetually leading the blind.

Picturing those who have surrendered the faculties of their formerly functioning minds and bodies seems an apt and timely critique of American culture, though a youthfully unconflicted one. Schutz handles it deftly, however, by exposing both the absurdity of that reality, and the hopelessness of protesting it. CL



New York

Marcel Dzama: The Course of Human History Personified

David Zwirner

8 SEPTEMBER – 8 OCTOBER

A young artist could do worse than to get profiled in *The New York Times Magazine* just prior to the opening of his new fall show. That such a profile might appear in the magazine's 'Style' section, and that it might be written by a *Times* columnist whose regular gig it is to pose 'Questions' to various notables in the hopes of discovering that they don't believe in their own opinions (but don't mind getting paid for them anyway), is enough to give any former member of an art collective pause. But then the artist remembers that the work can speak for itself, and out comes a downpayment on new studio space.

All of which is to say that Marcel Dzama's new show at David Zwirner, ambitiously titled *The Course of Human History Personified*, appears to be a rousing success. On view are a prodigious number of new (but at the same time familiar) drawings depicting scenes from a social imaginary at once placid and sinister. Departing from the childhood fears and fascinations with closets, cowboys and ghosts, Dzama's new work seems to have reached that moment in late adolescence when self-consciousness gives way to cognizance of the intimate link between suffering and social order, a time when all the world appears bent and the nuances of politics are considered adult impairments.

It is a precocious adolescence too. Though perhaps closest to Amy Cutler's visionary bizarreness, Dzama's work seems to draw figural strategies from Japanese animation (one thinks here of Miyazaki more than Murakami) while organizing them according to a distinctly Western trope: the frontier. In his scenes we find ourselves amongst the trees and creatures (sometimes one and the same thing) of a borderland between a natural world and the culture that

is coming to dominate it. The boundary between such states is always a porous one, and the baser instincts of human behaviour always manage to leech into the abstractions of law and order when a firearm and waving flag prove the only centres of power – little wonder, then, that the economy on display here is predominantly libidinal.

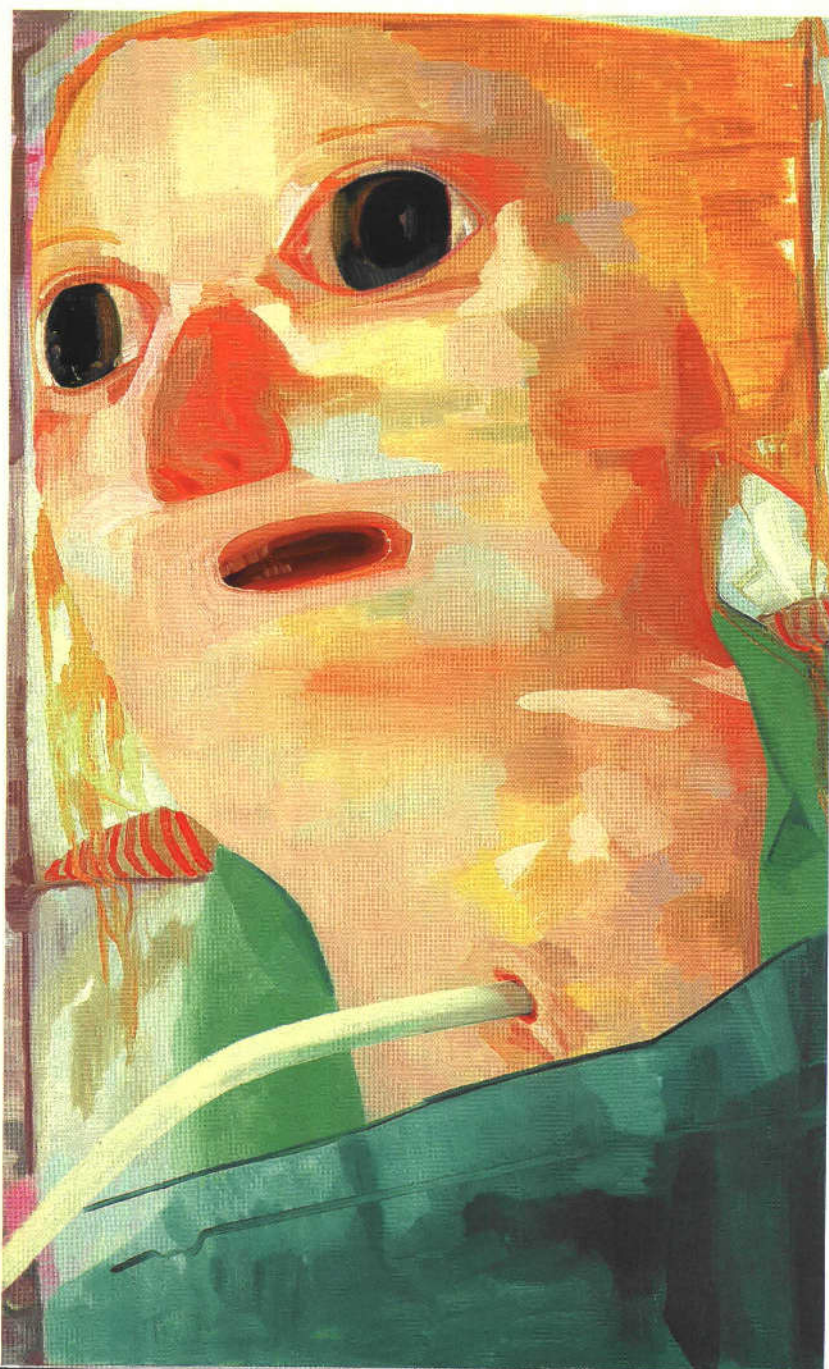
If one needs a figure for this state of squandered (or squandering) grace, I would suggest attending to the many 'heads' that pervade the drawn pages and even make their way onto the gallery floor in the form of three large cast-resin sculptures – *Joyce Neptune*, *Poison with Self Confidence*, and *Two Face Tree* (all 2005). Of the two kinds, those without bodies (viz. the sculptures) and those that have been severed from bodies (on view in the drawings), the latter remind us that decapitation played as much a role in the founding of the modern state as in its ensuing terrors, while the former seem to signal that disembodied thought is better suited to providing respite for those who go marauding. JTDN

Above
Marcel Dzama *Neptune*, 2005, ink and watercolour on paper, 48-part drawing, overall dimensions 152 x 335 cm
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND DAVID ZWIRNER, NEW YORK

Left
Dana Schutz *Vertical Life Support*, 2005, oil on canvas, 155 x 92 cm
PHOTO: JOCHEN LITTKEMANN
COURTESY CONTEMPORARY FINE ARTS, BERLIN

Facing page from top
Installation shot of Paloma Varga Weisz at Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York, showing (from front) *Fallende Frau, Doppelköpfig*, 2004, carved limewood and fabric, 229 x 76 x 38 cm; *Frauenbüste I*, 2004, carved limewood bust on a wood and velvet chair, 91 x 50 x 38 cm
PHOTO: DAVID REGEN
COURTESY BARBARA GLADSTONE GALLERY, NEW YORK. © PALOMA VARGA WEISZ

Erik Moskowitz, *A Bit of Dirt*, 2005, video still
COURTESY THE ARTIST



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