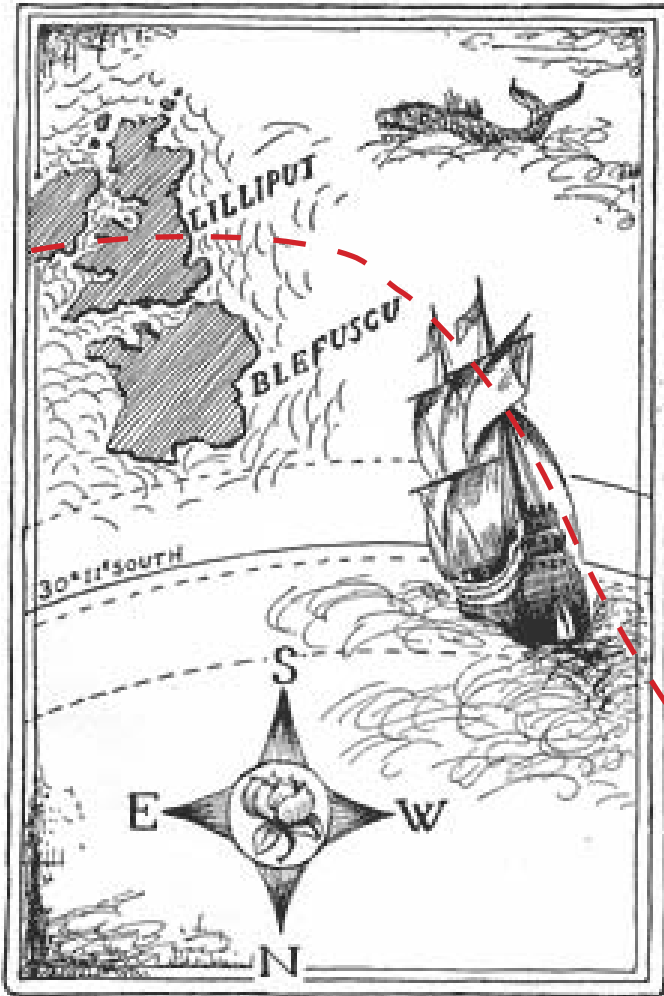


Horsplay

September 8-October 22, 2011



HORSPLAY

It is now four hundred Years to the Day that I entertained the fourth and final of my Voyages to several unchartered Territories of the Earth: this being my Sojourn among those most noble of all Creatures I had theretofore encountered in every of my long Adventures: that Race of Animals (Horse-like in Appearance only: for their advanced Nature and unrivaled Culture and Philosophy I soon discovered to be infinitely more nuanced and incorruptible than that of mine own Species). I speak, of course, of the [Houyhnhnms](#).

Much has changed in that time: many Advances in the Sciences and Mathematics, which at this late date would make those former Members of the Academies of [Lagado](#) wither in Speculation: their early and futile Experimentations with the extraction of Sunbeams from Cucumbers, for example, or the distillation of edible Food from human excrement, among other myriad and disparate failures, having now been superseded in most Nations by a singularly more wholesome, subtle, and noble preoccupation with the Saving of the Planet through the Recycling of its Resources.

I would humbly submit that the Arts, perhaps most of all, have evolved beyond earlier Recognition: not only in the Scope of subsequent Endeavors, but more assiduously in the multivalent Expressions of Content. No longer is the Artist to be equipped solely with Minerals and Solvents, Fabrics, Wood, Stones or precious Metals: instead, an enormous Variety of Technical Devices and Products of fine Engineering; Materials of Synthetic Formulation; the Performance of Fanciful Expressions derived from the finest of human

Vernacular; not to mention that most excellent Conceit: the Introduction of the *Concept* as an Object unto itself; this despite the Perpetuation of those established Techniques already articulated, but modified, reformulated, and acted upon unchastened by the Imagination: all of a Scale and Proportion which would make a [Brobdingnagian](#) proud!

Hereby, equipped with a SwiftSearch® GPS: no more capable or exacting a device than my trusty Compass and [Sextant](#), but infinitely more diverting; I shall attempt to navigate, along with the Advice of my good Companion, the Realm of this Exhibition of Particulars: assisted as well by the Measure and Means of my earlier Experience in combination with the accumulated Knowledge gained from many restless Decades of Travel and Readings.

*Sir, it is my privilege and pleasure to accompany you.
Thank you.*

I have found it of utmost importance when visiting strange Territories that one ingratiate oneself to the local Population to the greatest Degree possible: that the Advancement of Humility, whether feigned or genuine, is never a Disservice to the General Polity.

Your civility is well documented. Where should we begin, then? How about [Meredith Allen](#)? To whom this exhibition is dedicated. Her photographs of garbage bags are really wonderful. Like jewels. Lapidary. They encourage you to look at these ordinary objects, often piled in a corner somewhere without notice, or when noticed, with disdain, in a totally different light.



Meredith Allen, Untitled, 2008, digital C print, 18.25 x 18.25 inches



Mia Brownell
Still Life with Sweet Dreams, 2010
Oil on canvas
48 x 60 inches



John Park
Animula, 2003
Video still

It is as if one were looking through an extraordinarily pellucid Lens: one, which has the Capacity to transform the Commonplace into the Miraculous. Much the same way *Glumdalclitch*, my “little Nurse” despite her height of near forty Foot: and who loved me: could weave the most exquisite Cloth for me to wear without apparent Effort. For is it not the outward Display of Application that, in effect, diminishes Art?

True. The same could be said of Mia Brownell's paintings. I find the detail so fine and exacting that the images she evokes appear almost real, without going to the extremes of, say, trompe l'oeil. It seems to me her concerns are not so much with creating a replica of something as much as describing another, alien world; feverishly, believably organic, yet totally imaginary. I guess my point is, that you don't get hung up on how she does it. But just enjoy it.

As you may already know, I have [severally](#) referred in my Writings to the Necessities of Nature: often to my Detriment among those Critics of such Virtuousness and Probity: who Opine only in the Interests of the Public Good and who loathe all Things Infelicitous. Yet there is something delectable about the Painting, *Still Life with Sweet Dreams*, which redounds to my Philosophy in its indirect Display of the Particulars of a Digestive Tract cavorting with the Fruits of certain Trees and Vines.

It's got the same degree of exoticism that I find in John Park's video animation, Animula, where beauty is so closely aligned with the [grotesque](#); like two sides of a spinning coin. Locked in a subterranean dance, the duet is mesmerizing. Or does that sound hokey?

Nonsense, the Word does not exist in my Vocabulary. Moreover, in the Attempt to Describe that which by its very Nature is Mute one can only apply whatever Material Reasoning is at Hand: fortified by whatever Ancillary Skill one possesses. That is the Use of Academics. I, for one, am reminded by it of my first Sojourn to the Governor's Palace in *Glubbudubdrib*. (29°N, 140°W). The Island is inhabited by Sorcerers and Magicians: hence its Name: who are serviced exclusively by Specters. Upon first Encounter of these, I found the Experience tremendously disconcerting: "that made my Flesh creep with a Horror I cannot express": but out of Continuance, they soon enough grew Commonplace: and my Fears abated.

If I remember correctly, it was soon afterward that you returned via [Luggnagg](#) and Japan, back to England, essentially ending your third Voyage. I've included a pair of oil paintings by [Paul Marcus](#), which I felt were appropriate to the notions you give account to in your writings.



Paul Marcus
Christmas Eve, 1996
Oil on panel
22 x 20 inches

Yes, they are quite homely enough: in the true Meaning of the Word. My Creator chose to fashion me temperamentally a Restless Creature. I was never want to remain too long among my Wife or Family, nor any of mine own Society for that matter: with its exasperating Architecture of petty Formalities: before a persistent Agitation and Thirst for Adventure soon beckoned me once again to Foreign Parts. (This Sensation is precisely configured in the Photography of [Martin Kruck](#): wherein Figure and Horizon are fused into a seamless Union: both Harmonious and Agreeable.)

I like them a lot, the Xcape Series. The one called 'Province' reminds me somewhat of the [Yahoos](#). Creatures you found even more dreadful than Europeans. Right?



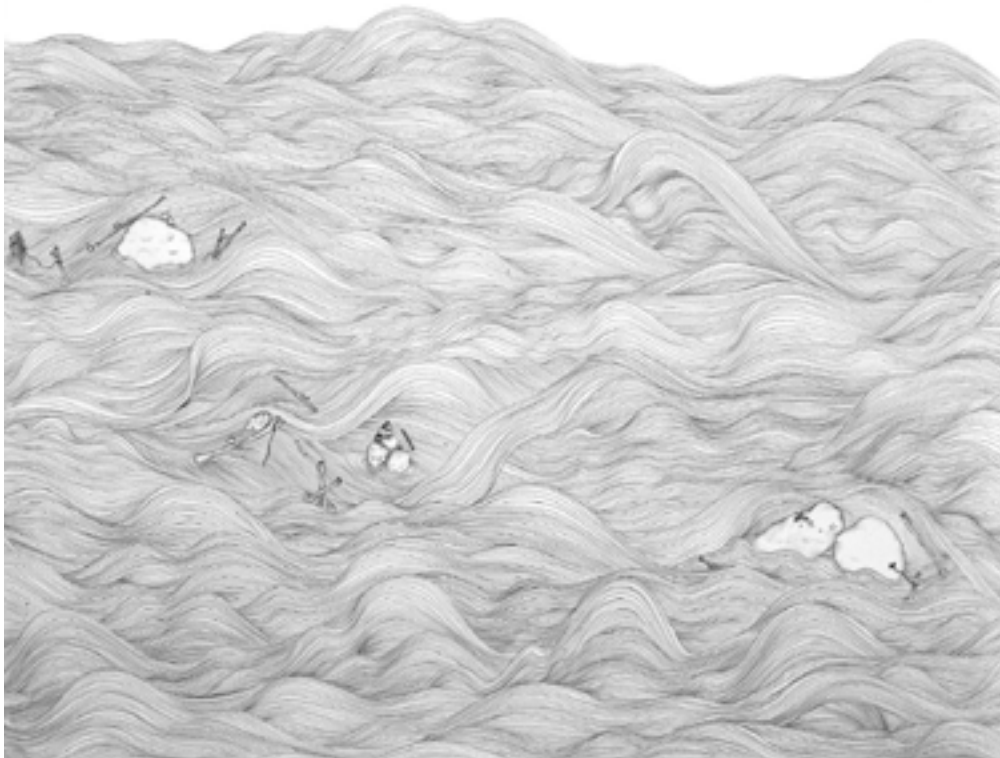
Martin Kruck, *Xcape #5*, 2005, Photography/Digital Print, 20 x 36 inches

While thinking on the Consequence of my General Distaste for Human Companionship: especially after my Years among the Noble Horses: I cannot help but recall those Words of His Majesty, King of *Brobdingnag*, who after several Discourses with Myself concerning the Universal Nature of Humankind, concluded “[I find] the Bulk of your Natives, to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth.”

You, too, are considered by many to be a misanthrope.

No, not I: but He who created me. It has, for Him, been a deep Well of Inspiration and Judicious Insight: He has spent considerable Effort in describing the Innate Corruption of Humanity: and has calculated well all the terrible Consequences of this Predilection.

Speaking of the Kruck photos, I would like to add that they illustrate another of your creator’s major themes, as a satirist and critic of the Enlightenment, not to mention one of the earliest practitioners of Science Fiction. That being the inherent inability of mankind to imagine the world outside the lens of the ego. Your travels to alien lands demonstrated the fact that you were actually the alien. In other words, Kruck’s figures look to us to be representations of ourselves, human beings, which they are. But to a Lilliputian they would appear a gigantic motion picture screen version of a Lilliputian; alternately, to a citizen of Brobdingnag, a postage stamp replica of one of their own. It is impossible for someone to imagine otherwise. At least it was back then. Am I making sense?



Jenna Spevak
Deluge (detail), 2008
Graphite on paper mounted on board
36 x 96 inches

It might be more aptly appreciated had you followed the Basic Rule of Healthy Narrative: “show, don’t tell.” Consider **Jenna Spevak**: her sublimely artful drawing, *Deluge*: a Parable of fine Craft and Detail. Oftentimes, I have experienced such Misadventure: and recognized the true and unspeakable Terror and Spectacle preceding my subsequent Rescue through any Variety of Means. Many have derided me for my Diffidence and Passivity amid these dire Episodes: but were it not for the Hand of my Creator there would be no story to tell. That would well be Rule Number Two.

The notion of rescue, or better yet, self-rescue, plays a significant role in Dumpster No. 2, Mark Franchino’s sculpture; along with Sci-fi and recycling.

Here we find the Conflation of Necessity and Comfort: not unlike being aboard Ship: and I have had the Privilege of knowing Many. The interior is appointed with all of the Essentials of Personal Protocol, without Extraneous Matters. It might well indicate **Mr. Franchino** does not have the most Encouraging Perspective for those Times to Come: nonetheless, there is room for argument. I have heard recently of Several such Occasions where one’s Needs are honed to the most crucial of Survivalist Speculation: As a species, we have an Insuperable Resolve to remain living. Yet, thankfully, we are not all *Struldbruggs*: those miserable “Immortals” of *Luggnagg*, continuing on forever in Increasing Degradation and Despair. All of us need and want to die eventually.

*I would also add that it’s better to die than to go missing; for those left behind to bear that terrible uncertainty; so hauntingly physicalized in **Carin Whitney’s** MPs. The austerity of the black and white photos clasped together in a transparent Plexiglas casing, like spirits frozen for all time, voiceless*



Mark Franchino
Dumpster 1, 2010
Cardboard, duct tape, hot glue
8 x 12 x 22 feet



Carin Whitney
MPs, 2000
Accordion bound book

and distant as a police record, which I guess many of them are.

There are Countless such Occurrences throughout History: yet for the Purpose of our Present Enterprise I submit we Eschew the Urgency of these Issues: weigh Anchor and venture on: for unlike my Creator I suffer little from a Social Conscience. It is to my Discredit: but it has enabled me to forbear much of what He hath placed in my Path. His Imagination has been my Reckoning: the Ferocity of His Wit, my Undoing. Perhaps, if certain Conditions and Attitudes contrary to mine own had not been exacted by Him so untowardly I would have comported myself otherwise. Who is to say? I have never once considered myself *Ulysses*: in Character, I lack the Credentials.

It sounds to me as if he were using you to demonstrate for his own purposes—like a puppet. At one point he even assigned you the name Grildrig, or ‘girl thing,’ meaning a doll. It must have been very frustrating at times not to have been offered a choice; the two of you, character and creator, roiling in this mash up of eternal opposites; a snake eating its own tail sort of a thing; sometimes fierce, often comic, like Enzo and Rose in Todd Mariani’s gouache paintings. A true pair of Yahoos.

I will never condescend to admit that I am a Yahoo, even metaphorically. After having examined them in their Native Attributions: of which there are None salubrious: I found they are a Breed of Supreme Vulgarity and Nastiness: without any Hope for Redemption. It is painful enough that I am now forced to dwell among them without the Succor of the wise and virtuous *Houyhnhnms*, “who abound in all the Excellencies that can adorn a Rational Creature.”



Todd Mariani
From the series *Enzo and Rose*, 2010
Gouache and graphite on board
14 x 11 inches

Actually, the inspiration for my part of our dialogue, as well as the title for the exhibition, came from a short video by [Sarah Paul](#), where she's singing about her love for a toy pony. It was a eureka moment. And like much of her work, hilarious. This one is the latest in a series of episodes based on her alter ego, *Little Miss Cleveland*, projected on a gargantuan scale, like the *Queen of Brobdingnag*. I think she's doing something in it with baseball players, though it's hard to tell.

These Wonders of Technology: wherein the Art itself is a mighty Confluence of Light and Sound: quite foreign to my Thinking: yet considering my Adventures not at all beyond the Scope of my Credulity: conjures up in me nothing more than the Physical Manifestation of the Phenomenal. I remember well my first Experiences with *Cameras Obscurae*: they were no less exhilarating!

[Michael Bosworth](#) is working with similar media, only the realm of his projection takes place in a fish tank: a tiny, [dilu-vial](#) suburbia. It's a singularly poetic evocation of natural disaster, the sort of thing we read about all the time, or watch on the internet; but rarely, if ever, have the grave misfortune to know personally.

Michael and I met while in my recent visit to *Flubbnyglof*, which translates roughly as *Ethereal City*, or *City of Voluminous Clouds* ([43°N, 79°W](#)): a Place worthy of some Remark. I had traveled there some thirty Years previous, finding it then to be a Land of Odd Enterprise: its Inhabitants of considerable Resourcefulness. In these and other Sundry Regards it has remained unchanged: while, despite the apparent Opulence: the Magnificent Temples to the Arts and



Sarah Paul
Little Miss Cleveland & the Flaming Sunset #11, 2011
Video still



Michael Bosworth
not me, and probably not you, 2010
Video still

Learning: there were interspersed throughout the Territory large Tracts of Squalor and Despondency. In the Heat of the Summer: for it was that Season: I witnessed a great Array of Subjects of both Sexes who roamed the Streets of the Metropolis much in the Manner of Ghosts: numinous and inchoate: with little or no Movement of the Eyes or Limbs: it being my Assumption that those of greater Accomplishment and Vitality remained within their Grand Houses: wherein I understood the air to be artificially cooled. All the while I noticed with some degree of Discomfiture that my every Movement was in some fashion Surveilled whither I wandered: an abiding Awareness of Subliminal Restiveness and Violence.

As is my Want, Departure from *Flubbnyglof* was met with little Resistance and some Measure of Relief: for I am at most become by the ragged Persistence of Age a Brittle and Obdurate Wanderer: though Traces of my Journey are painted in a most Excellent Light: despite the Sufferances of prior Description.

I had a good time too.

Bill Maynes, Guest Curator

