

OUT & ABOUT

PAM JOSEPH WUNDERLUST @ FRANCIS NAUMANN FINE ART GALLERY

By Hilary Stunda



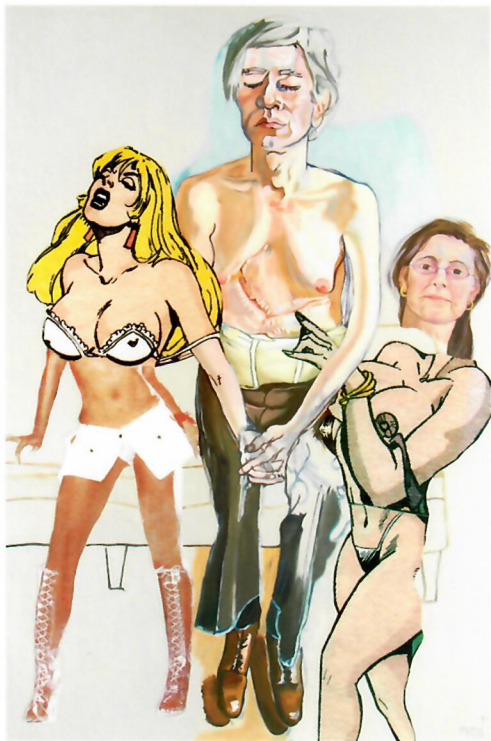
"Rousseau Cinématique," 2008. Oil with Collage on Linen. Panel 8: 45 x 64.5 in.

When I think of Pam Joseph's work, I imagine standing before Bernini's classic sculpture *Pluto and Proserpina*, with Pluto wrestling a naked Proserpina, while behind it as backdrop is a Victoria Secret billboard advertisement, the golden cleavage, faceless head thrown back in pleasure, blown ten-stories high in technicolor.

For Joseph, this is when the fun begins.

Pam Joseph's body of work explores issues of sexuality and gender, the sacred and the profane, violence and chance. She finds creativity in mixed metaphors, styles and techniques. Incongruity reigns. In past works, such as her *Calendar Girl* series, Joseph used 1960s Italian pin-up calendars she found in a Roman flea market for her paintings and collages on shooting targets. Her show *Naked Madonna* took a playful look at Mary, seeing the Virgin as a modern woman, wearing a crown of thorns, weeping, a hand to her face, bearing long nails and red lips.

Victim or power vixen? Joseph's women are survivors and if they have to use their sexuality to their advantage, so be it.



Joseph's solo show *Wunderlust* at Francis Naumann this month will showcase works from the *Postcard Painting* series featuring a nine panel work called "Rousseau Cinématique." For her Postcards, Joseph collages erotic images from London tart cards and Mexican pornographic comic books onto reproductions of museum masterpieces that she has collected over the years. She then digitally manipulates them, overlapping and receding the new visual information into the other artist's painting. From this interpretation she'll create a painting with the original collaged elements. Finally, she'll photograph it and reproduce it to the size of a postcard.

Joseph understands the power of image. By manipulating such icons as Magritte, Rousseau, Courbet, Dali and Duchamp, the new adaptations are not only outrageous and humorous, but laced with an absurdist's dark humor. Her "Re-Origin of the World" (2006) after Gustave Courbet's "L'Origine du Monde," interweaves shards of pornography between the splayed legs. A fist. A mixed-racial couple, a side-glance of a woman's closed eyes and open mouth.

For "Rousseau Cinématique," Joseph's homage to Rousseau's "The Horse Being Attacked by a Jaguar" (1910), she reworks Rousseau's primitivist tableaux by introducing pornographic images of women fondling themselves or mouths agape in what could be perceived as ecstasy or horror. A visage peers through the tall verdant blades of grass while, in the foreground, a white horse lies in

Joseph has broken the large work into nine separate panels (oil and collage on linen), each panel akin to a frame of a movie still which can be observed alone or as a larger whole. The dot matrix degradation of the blown-up comics juxtaposed to the classical oil technique is the perfect visual incongruity nailing contemporary culture.

Throughout the ages, Western pornography embodies the oppression of women; woman-as-victim; but just as pornography can teeter on the hilarious, here too Joseph has leavened it with humor. In American Nudism, after Rubens' masterpiece, "Head Of Medusa" (1617), Joseph superimposes Medusa's wild-eyed head onto a 1950s postcard of a nudist gathering. The nudists, replete with a woman in a 50s hair-do and cat-eyed glasses, peer innocently below as Rubens' snakes coil and float dangerously close-by.

Rubens, Rousseau and Joseph make good company with their snakes, white horses and porn stars. We're just human after all.



"American Nudism, after Rubens," 2009. Oil with Collage on Linen, 28.12 x 42.12 in.

Wunderlust will be at Francis M. Naumann Fine Art from November 11th to December 23rd.