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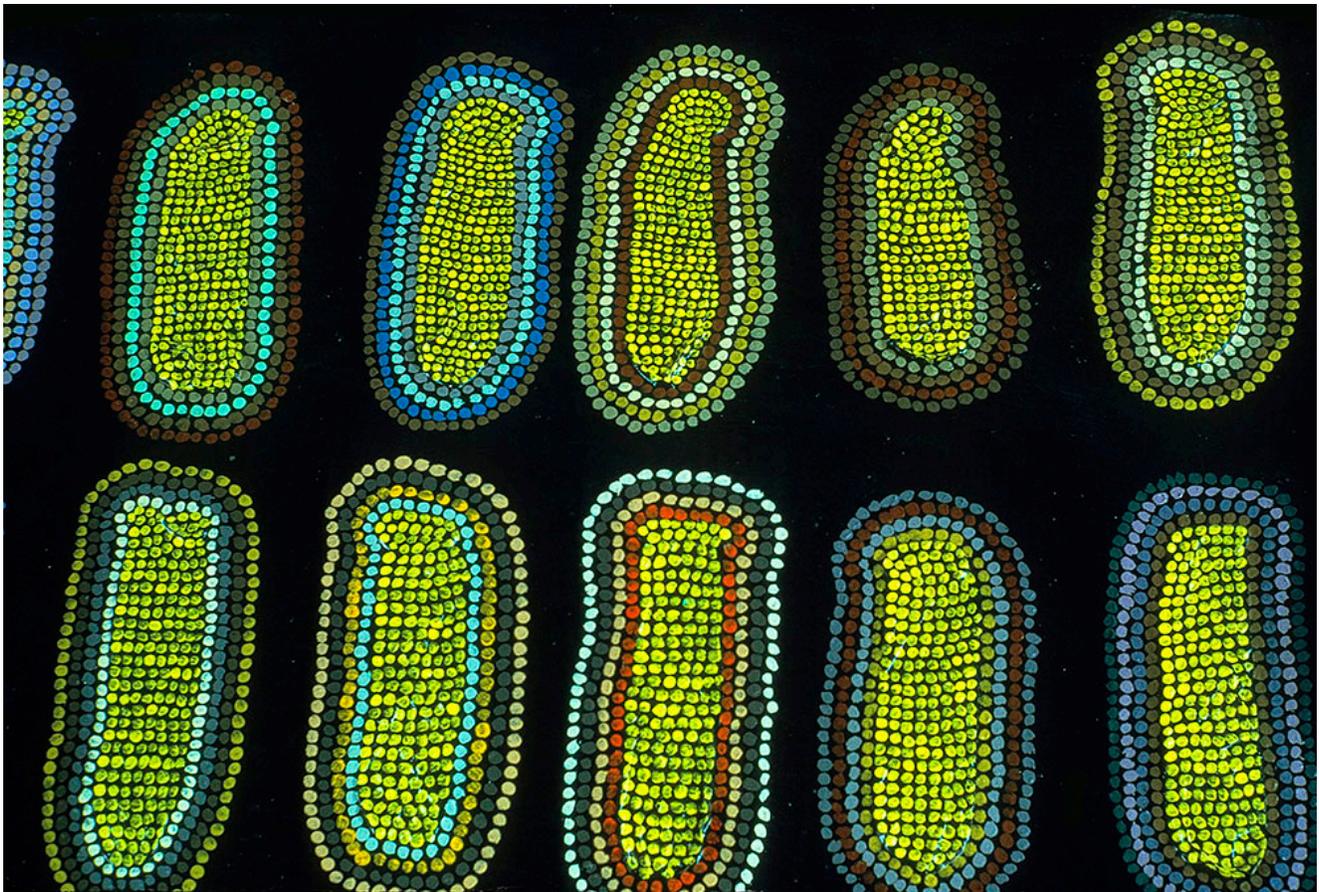
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# Beyond Funk

SEPTEMBER 9, 2021

by [Julia Couzens](#)



Joan Moment, Haloed Condom Relief Piece No. 7 (Detail), 1971, acrylic, rubber latex, neoprene, gauze, condoms, 83.5 x 60 inches

In 1962, when she was 50, Adeliza McHugh opened the now-legendary Candy Store Gallery in the Sierra foothill town of Folsom, California. Named for the confectionery she attempted to launch in the same space, the gallery occupied two rooms of a small Victorian house, reached by a flight of rickety stairs. Amid Gold Country bait-and-tackle shops, bars, antique and junk shops, nothing could have been more anomalous than this decidedly eccentric contemporary art gallery. The roster of artists she exhibited – 117 in all – reads like a who's who of the period. It included Robert Arneson, Roy De Forest, Jim Nutt, Gladys Nilsson, William T. Wiley, Clayton Bailey, David Gilhooly and many others.

McHugh possessed no background in art, but her timing and eye could not have been better. The '60s and '70s were heady decades for art in Northern California and the Central Valley in particular. Led by faculty, students and visiting professors, the region became a hotbed of innovation and a magnet for curators seeking fresh ideas, the dominant among them being Funk. It was defined by an exhibition of the same title organized in 1967 by Peter Selz. He used the word as a catch-all for a wide variety of raw, unruly, rebellious and sometimes vulgar modes of artmaking that he observed taking place within a 100-mile radius of his curatorial perch at the University Art Museum at UC Berkeley.

When Selz arrived there in 1965, Arneson, De Forest and Wiley were already well-established, balancing burgeoning art careers with tenured teaching positions at UC Davis. By 1970, Jim Nutt, Gladys Nilsson, Joan Moment, William Allan, Carlos Villa, and Joan Brown were doing the same at Sac State. A turning point for the latter group came when Marcia Tucker, a curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, travelled to the West Coast in search of new talent. She awarded solo shows to four Sac State faculty members: Nilsson in 1973 and Moment, Nutt and Allan in 1974. McHugh



Ann Leda Shapiro, *To Genie Love*, 1971, etching, 9 3/4 x 5 3/4 inches

supported these artists at a level unmatched by any Sacramento-area dealer.

Three exhibitions promise to expand our understanding of McHugh's contributions. The first, *New Flavors: Collected at the Candy*

*Store/Selections from the Manetti Shrem Museum* – developed in conjunction with two similarly themed exhibitions opening at the Crocker Art Museum January 30 and at Sac State March 14 — offers a refreshing and

stimulating snapshot of the gallery's legacy. Largely bypassing the roster of usual suspects (read: Arneson, De Forest and Gilhooley), co-curators Jenna Blair and Susie Kantor, pulling mainly from the Manetti Shrem's deep collection, shine light on lesser-known female artists and artists of color while acknowledging the still-relevant contributions of their white male counterparts. The result is a nuanced show of discovery, unexpected connections and storylines that recalibrate our understanding of artistic precedence, context and influence. With only 24 pieces by 11 artists, the show represents a tiny fraction of the artists exhibited at the Candy Store. However, given McHugh's preference for highly detailed narrative works — most of which were small owing to the gallery's limited wall space — brevity becomes a virtue.

Joan Moment's *Haloed Condom Relief Piece No. 7* (1971), the conceptual lynchpin of the show, reaches beyond Funk's rudely jocular visual punditry to address the more significant concerns of feminism and sexuality. Inspired by Eva Hesse's rubber latex hangings and Yayoi Kusama's early phallus-encrusted sculptures, the work best conveys the curators' premise. Fabricated from layers of rubber latex, neoprene rubber, gauze, condoms and acrylic, the painting recalls the dotted sequences seen in Australian Aborigine bark paintings and African clay vessels. The wiggling grid of condoms, both comic and figurative — topped by haloes delineated in acid yellow and covered with meticulously painted dots — writhes like primordial amoeba on a black ground, riveting the eye with its relentless motion.

Another highlight is Ann Leda Shapiro's *To Genie Love* (1971), a finely wrought etching of a naked woman standing on the back of a male lion possessed of a human face. The performative relationship between them suggests collaboration and balance, yet sharp nicks, incisions and sprouting hair stubble dotting the woman's body and face suggest a psychologically disturbed or wounded interior state. Actual wounds came later: In 1973, Shapiro, a UC Davis alum, became the second Northern California woman to

receive a solo show at the Whitney Museum of American art, only to have two works from that exhibition removed when objections to her depictions of hermaphroditic figures arose. She found recompense decades later when donors purchased the censored works for the Seattle Museum of Art.

Pam Scrutton, another Davis alum, has operated mainly under the radar,

so it's a revelation to see four of her resolutely feminist works. Her modestly scaled paintings are both knowing and primitive, deploying a skewed perspective in cynical narratives of domestic life. *Great Trials* (1971), a sardonic depiction of middle-class boredom in which people enact banal scenes (stumbling, smiling, exercising, yawning and spilling milk), recalls the



Joan Moment, *Haloed Condom Relief Piece No. 7*, 1972, acrylic, rubber latex, neoprene, gauze, condoms, 83.5 x 60 inches

compositional strategy of Mernet Larson, another painter of psychological intrigue. *Goody Goody* (1970), which aims at propriety, sentimentality and social class with painstakingly rendered images of white gloves, roses and blonde, be-ribboned wreaths in flattened, compressed space, brings to mind Ree Morton.

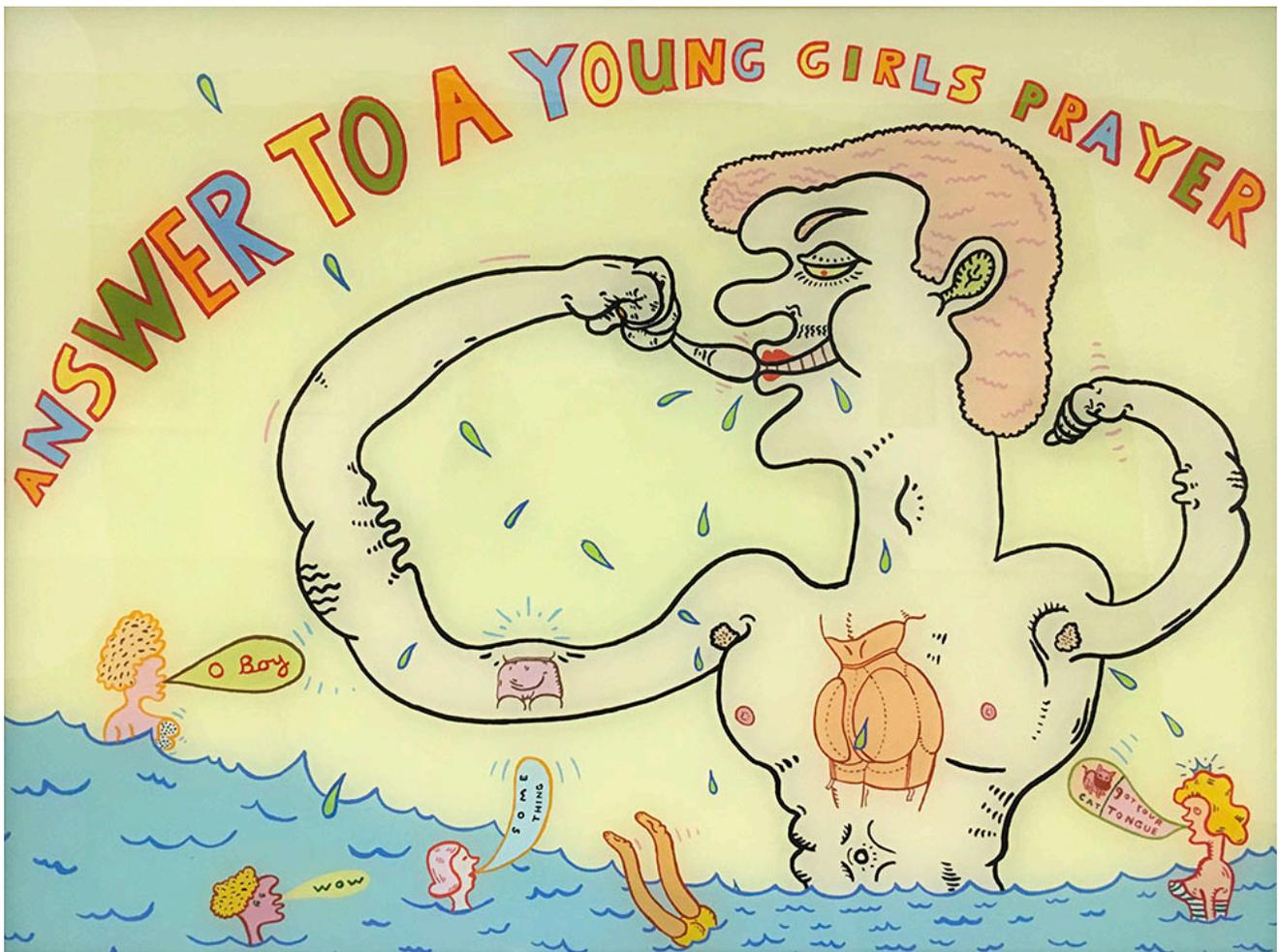


Pam Scrutton, *Great Trials*, 1971, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 inches

Former UCD professor George C. Longfish (Seneca/Tuscarora) melds native craft traditions and contemporary artmaking impulses. *Take Two Aspirins and Call Me in the Morning, You Are on Target* (1984), a mural-sized painting

consisting of geometric patterns, defined by zigzagging diagonal lines and tribal motifs, carries strong hints of Native American blanket weaving and *parfleche*, but its scale and flattened pictorial space situate it closer to eccentric abstraction than to Funk. The same holds for Glenn Takai's monolith-like ceramic sculpture, *First Settlement* (1983). Its mounds of clay, compressed and sheared off at sharp angles and festooned with bits of graffiti and a metallic sheen, make for a breathtakingly beautiful object — a departure from the figurative works that defined his career.

The remainder of the show falls more in line with the kind of period narratives we've come to expect. Those belonging to Jim Nutt, for example, draw us in with itchy, sardonic depictions of fraught bodies and psychodramas of male sexuality. *Answer to a Young Girl's Prayer* (1969), a polymer painting on plexiglas, depicts women frolicking in water and cooing to a preening Adonis sporting a girdled derriere tattooed on his chest. *You're So Coarse*, an etching — also by Nutt — shows an array of snot-nosed stick figures engaged in uncouth acts such as public spitting, farting, pinching and peeing. In this and other works, Nutt invites us to partake of the abject and the low; both were hallmarks of the Chicago-based Hairy Who group to which he and his wife, Gladys Nilsson, were aligned before their four-year



Jim Nutt, *Answer to a Young Girl's Prayer*, 1969, acrylic on plexiglas, 17.5 x 23.5 inches

stay in Sacramento. Nilsson's *Sunshine – of -Your Smile Mask* (c. 1968) shows storybook figures, some as small as Lilliputians, trying on masks as if attempting to construct socially acceptable versions of themselves. Luis Cruz Azaceta's *City Lamp* (1979), a large acrylic painting, presents a dystopian vision of urban life. In it, two lovers, dwarfed by a city skyline, sleep underneath a looming desk lamp on a floor dotted with ashtrays and cigarette butts. Above them, an amputated thigh in a black fishnet stocking swings from a trapeze while a flag, decorated with a hot dog, waves staunchly.

To the unwitting visitor, Adeliza McHugh, with her shock of white hair and knitting needles aflutter, may have looked like a grandmother, but her exhibitions almost always packed a punch. *New Flavors*, with a decidedly feminist/non-white perspective, enlarges our view of that history.

# # #

*"New Flavors: Collected at the Candy Store" @ [Manetti Shrem Museum](#) through October 24, 2021. The show also includes works by Luis Jimenez, Maija Peeples-Bright and Sandra Shannonhouse.*

### **Related exhibitions:**

*"The Candy Store: Funk, Nut and Other Art with a Kick" @ [Crocker Art Museum](#), January 30 to May 1, 2022.*

*"Everything is Possible, Nothing is Probable: The Legacy of the Candy Store Gallery in the Sacramento State Art Collection" @ [University Library Gallery, Sac State](#), March 14 to May 27, 2022.*

### **About the author:**

Julia Couzens is a Sacramento-based artist and writer whose work has been widely shown, most recently at Patricia Sweetow Gallery. Her work has been recognized with a Louis Comfort Tiffany Fellowship and is held in museum and public collections throughout the US. These include the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts; Berkeley Art Museum; Oakland Museum; Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina; and Yale University Art Gallery. She lives and works on Merritt Island in the Sacramento River delta.

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