

## **Richard Hawkins**

Featuring 13 Flamboyant Fiends

13 September - 12 October 2024

The title of the exhibition refers, partly, to the appearance of monsters and their familiars in my 3 sequences of new videos. There may or may not be 13 fiends – it just seemed a better sounding number in the otherwise alliterative collection of F-words.

I could have also titled the show “Featuring 13 Fabulous Fiends”. Or Flagrant Fiends or, maybe closer to my intention, Effeminate Fiends. Salome, Dracula, Baubo, Cybele, gay murderers, suicides, creeps, zombies and severed heads have all wandered in and out of my practice for years. Focusing on these fiends (though, granted, it does definitely depend on who’s calling who a “fiend”) might signal an as-yet-incomplete re-evaluation of the role I’d like these figures to play in my art. One part of me thinks the fiendish vampire parasite infant’s fantasies/nightmares about the mother’s body are the only thing at play here. Another part thinks it’s just a way of weeding out my audience so I’m really only left with the perpetually slightly gothy and camp well-read and nerdy culture Faggots like myself.

### The Lust for Evil Sequence

A little eye- and ear-candy to begin with, a fantasy that predates my series of iris prints from 1995 featuring “Little Darlings”-era Matt Dillon. (Watching the movie again recently I was left wondering if the filmmakers were aware that the blue hankie right rear pocket had a very specific meaning for their gay audience). I’ve paired it with a song from the band Sweet, a byproduct of speculations into the puberty-age energy that sparks the haunting in the mid-70s real-life Enfield Poltergeist. In a room where the walls are obsessively collaged with nothing but boyhunger – a dizzying multitude of pinups featuring Starsky & Hutch, the Bay City Rollers, Donny Osmond et al – I can’t help wondering if Sweet’s particular combination of suggestive lyrics and tight satin pants somehow served as a catalyst for this little *vas hermeticum* of budding sexuality.

Next, a temporally contained approximation of my pre-digital “Kafka’s Birthday” (1988). The original title is something of a misdirection, Franz Kafka and Tom Cruise do share a birthdate (July 3), but the ultimate intention of throwing together a blown-up drawing by Kafka with polaroids of the naughty parts from movies starring Cruise was to investigate what I believed to be desire’s interdependent exchange of object-idealization and self-abnegation. The polaroids stood in for how the always-mediated love object gets libidinally over-scrutinized, and the drawing for more of what seemed to me to be the fantasy fuel for this kind of desire: utter despair.

In my new version, notice the sloshing toilet uncontainableness and the geyser-like ejaculations throughout Meg Mucklebones’s swamp. Her/it’s/his? character serves to foreground some of the previously unacknowledged aspects of the desiring dynamic I’d once proposed; one that is largely sinister, more predatory and monstrous.

It’s then followed by a videoclip of Alain Delon in “Purple Noon” (1960) framed yet partially obscured by windows photoshopped onto the walls of abandoned fangirl bedrooms and contemporary goon caves. A totally intuitive companion to the Kafka-Cruise video but fitting, I now realize, as directly across from “Kafka’s Birthday” in the original 1988 show was a story I’d written – partially based on “The Burrow” – in which a man masturbates to death while waiting at the window for the reappearance of a desired-for neighbor. (Re-reminding myself here of the anecdote from “Saint Genet” where an apartment’s rented solely to observe a man the author had seen only once before).

Credits:

“Little Darlings”, 1980. Directed by Ronald F. Maxwell.

Sweet, “Block Buster!”. From the album “The Sweet”, 1973.

“Legend”, 1985, Directed by Ridley Scott.

“Plein Soleil”, 1960. Soundtrack by Nino Rota. Based on Patricia Highsmith’s “The Talented Mr. Ripley”. Also known as “Purple Noon”, “Full Sun”, “Blazing Sun” and “Lust for Evil”, Directed by René Clément.

### The George and Goliath Sequence

When I recently began to notice AI programs dumbing down their interfaces for us less tech-savvy amateurs, I was reminded of my George zombie heads specifically because, in addition to all the desire and psycho readings I’ve encouraged for them over the years, these prints (and their Photoshop 2.0 construction) were just as equally compelled by advances in democratizing print media and giddy feelings in the midst of the mid-90s near utopian pioneer frenzy of digital media and the www.

There are only a very few images of George left on the internet nowadays, but by downloading those low-res jpegs and running them through photo enhancing software, turning a description of him into a text-prompt for Firefly or using one of my old heads as an image-prompt in Midjourney, I found some of the more interesting results were the ones that didn’t adhere faithfully to my requests. AI seems to automatically default to monsters – but never anything nearing nudity, examples of terms that violate community standards: nipple, belly, bulge, blood...

Credits:

Photographs of George Clements by various photographers and from diverse internet resources have been altered via AI technology.

Orchestral Maneuvers in the Dark, “Sealand”. From the album “Architecture & Morality”, 1981.

Pollaiuolo, “Victorious David”, c. 1472. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin

Title sequence from “I, Claudius”, music composed by Wilfred Josephs for BBC, 1976.

Plus found images, clips, music and sound effects.

### The Böcklin and Berdella Sequence

These 3 scenes are connected by mood more than anything else. With the haunted dollhouses I always imagined putting repros of my favorite French Decadent art inside but there are huge technical problems in that most of the houses are too fragile to invite viewers to peek into the windows up-close. “Bordello on rue St. Lazare (2007)” is perhaps the only example with a framed reproduction (1:12 scale) of Boldini’s portrait of Comte Robert de Montesquiou inside. Building a collection of primarily decadent art for a haunted mansion has always been one of my favorite daydreams and of the several impulses behind my disembodied zombies, trying to imagine better art for the Munsters, the Addams Family and Vincent Price movie sets was definitely one of them.

I was halfway to adding treacherous rocks and disappearing Böcklin’s isle into miasmic fog when Midjourney decided this hunky fiend David with poor Goliath’s gory skull was a perfect fit. Best to blame it on the Glam Majesty of Jobriath.

The second scene features scans of collages verified to be by the hand of and from the estate of serial killer Robert Berdella, the “Kansas City Butcher”. I bought them from a dealer specializing in criminabilia who indicated that seemingly there had been a great many of these single page collages, each with a ballpoint pin notation stating the portrayed subject’s name and then filed away - according to the first letter of the subject’s name - in individual manila folders for each of the letters of the alphabet. Unfortunately, all the folders (and the collages within them) have been lost to history; the ones reproduced here are all that remain, the folders “R” and “H”.

Tanzio da Varallo (c. 1580- c. 1632) was a new find for me. I’ve tinkered here with one (1621) of his two known paintings on the subject of pink cheeked windswept golden haired Northern Italian twink David and the fresh blood and butcherfully dripping head of his best frenemy Goliath. Both paintings are in the Pinacoteca civica in his hometown of Varallo, Italy.

Credits:

Arnold Böcklin, “Die Toteninsel I”, 1880. Kunstmuseum, Basel

“The Last House”, 2010. Altered dollhouses and parts, various materials, lighting and table.

Jobriath, “What a Pretty” from “Creatures of the Street” (Elektra), 1974

17 collages in 2 folders, from the estate of Robert Berdella.

Trailer for “I, Monster” starring Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing. British Lion Films, 1971/UK and 1973/US, Directed by Stephen Weeks.

Black Sabbath, “War Pigs (instrumental)” from “Paranoid” (Vertigo), 1970

Tanzio da Varallo, “David con la testa di Golia”, 1616. Pinacoteca di Varallo e Museo Calderini, Varallo Sesia

Plus various found footage and audio.

-Richard Hawkins