

TOMMY HARTUNG IN

*Power Painter: Postmasters Gallery Delivers Anton Perich's Machine-Made Canvases*

By Jessica Dawson

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Excerpt

Full article available here:

<http://www.villagevoice.com/2014-11-05/art/anton-perich-electric-paintings-tommy-hartung-bible-review/>

There's a low-level apocalypse happening inside On Stellar Rays, where 35-year-old Tommy Hartung delivers a spooky exhibition of film and sculptures in which the only thing missing seems to be Ebola.

Hartung's show, modestly titled "THE BIBLE" — the all-caps shout seems fitting — orbits around his 48-minute film of the same name. Loosely based on the Old Testament, the film's most prevalent images are of destruction and moral decay.

Hartung has culled far-ranging images from video-game screens and surfed TV channels and interspersed them with scenes shot in his studio and starring his complicated assemblage sculptures. The soundtrack varies in tone and cadence, from an impassive voice describing a gay hate-crime murder to another voice talking about enlisting in the U.S. armed forces after 9-11. The cumulative effect might be liberal dross if it weren't for the leavening done by Hartung's deeply weird images.

Three-dimensional versions of some of those images haunt the gallery in a series of sculptures installed here and there and bathed in the eerie glow of the film's wall-size projection. They form a menagerie of menace: a monkey with a man's face, a three-headed (at least) man-woman made of bones, body parts, wigs, and twine (the piece includes bits and bobs from mannequins, whose goofy presence lightens the mood), and cascades of found stuff. Almost all have some kind of light issuing from within that adds to the room's glow.

It'd take too much space to identify the component parts of the seated figure of Abraham, but the major bits come through: An embroidery hoop thrown over a bit of white cloth and secured with twine stands in for the headband and keffiyeh of Islamic attire; the headpiece crowns a mutilated mask that rests on several more mannequin heads, which in turn preside over a body of bones and mannequin parts; there's also at least one wig. A hydra in bricolage, Abraham slumps like a bad guy tied up on a chair in an old caper film. The piece, like the others here, manifests the spirit of Hans Bellmer's creepy doll figures, with generous portions of Ed Kienholz's social-commentary assemblage sculptures, and a major dose of Isa Genzken's maquettes thrown in.

To say Hartung calls to mind so many other artists is to suggest the work is derivative. It's not. Hartung may wear his influences on his sleeve, but this chaos kasbah speaks a singular language.