

**POP SURREALISM
DINA GOLDSTEIN
AND THE REVOLUTION
IN CONTEMPORARY ART**



TEXT © BARRY DUMKA

DINA GOLDSTEIN
HEADLESS

Though still loose in its thematic structure and not always declared as an organizing principle by some of its leading artists, Pop Surrealism has nonetheless become a potent force in contemporary art. A street demonstration that turned into a mass movement. While its expression can be comical, carnal, kitschy, colorful and queer - its intent is plainly serious.

Pop Surrealism seeks to upend the long dry reign of minimalism and conceptual art and overcome abstraction's denial of the expressive opportunities in figurative work. It wants to get beneath the surface of pop cultural identity and find the meaning and magic, the dark realities and wild enchantments latent in the common lay of the land. It's a populist insurgency masquerading as a carnivalesque parade of lost souls. From the beginning, the critics begrudged its worth. Now, twenty years on, the revolution is winning.



MARK RYDEN
LITTLE BOY BLUE



CINDY SHERMAN
UNTITLED, #224

Pop Surrealism stems from the low brow art scene that grew up - or maybe never really grew up - in Southern California as America shifted to conservatism in the 1980s. That street art energy was too weirdly playful to be overtly political but it was still sending a message. New voices needed to be heard and a new visual language learned. At first institutional powers dismissed it as adolescent daydreaming. Mere juvenilia.

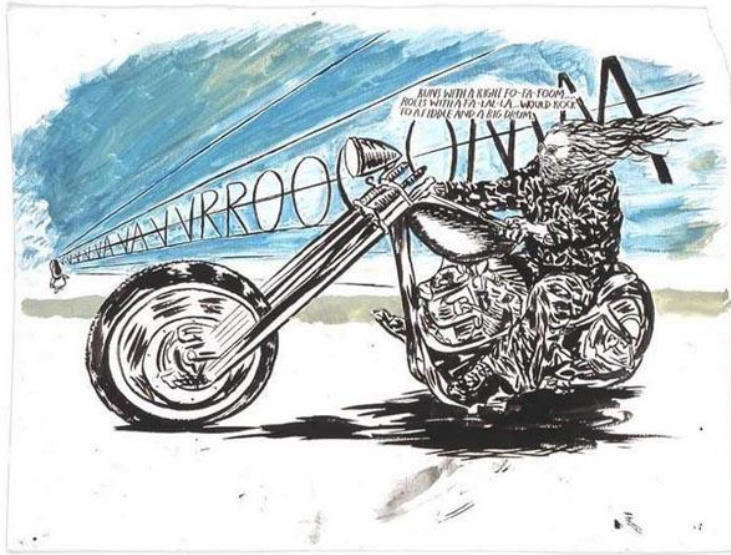
As the first master of the frat house, Robert Williams recalls, Pop Surrealism *`spawned from story illustration, comic book art, science fiction, movie poster art, motion picture production and effects animation, music art and posters, psychedelic and punk rock art, hot rod and biker art, surfer, beach bum and skateboard graphics, graffiti art, tattoo art, pin-up art, pornography and a myriad other commonplace egalitarian art forms. And all [were] simply dismissed and treated with condescension by the formal art authorities."*



ROBERT WILLIAMS
GREATER CONCERNS THAN MERE PUPPETRY



ROBERT WILLIAMS
IN THE PAVILION OF THE RED CLOWN



RAYMOND PETTIBON
VROOM

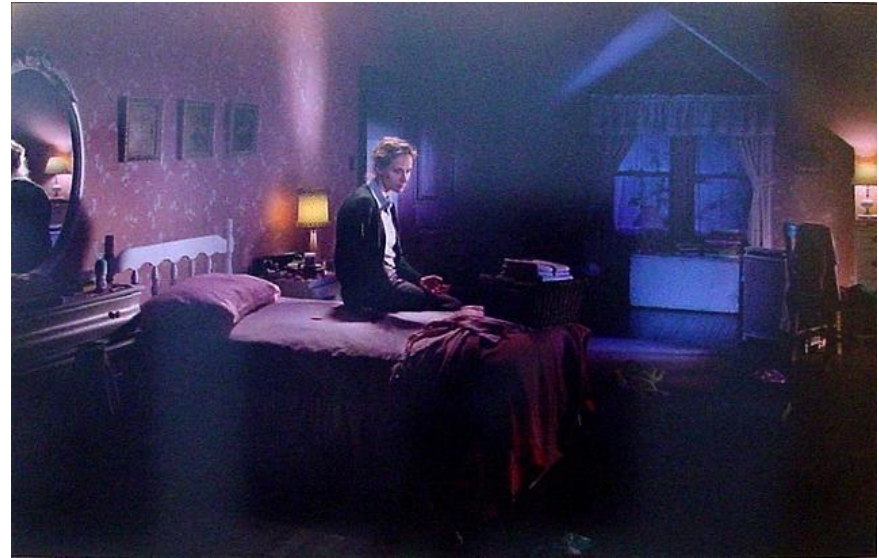


INTERIOR INSTALLATION OF *HELTER, SKELTER*

The first curatorial survey of this raucous group was the 1992 exhibition "Helter Skelter" at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles. Led by Williams - who, along with R. Crumb, were Zap Comix artists hailed by the underground as grungeforce gurus - the show involved themes such as alienation, dispossession and violence. It was a ribald reckoning for a consumerist credo run amok. Hosted in the shadows of the Hollywood entertainment complex, the exhibition was a scandal. And a success. Robert Hughes - Time magazine's illustrious critic - dismissed it as "valley girl dada". Still, 8000 people attended the opening and the line in front of the museum lasted for weeks. The following year, the Laguna Art Museum opened "Kustom Kulture" which revalued the artistry of customized cars - dubbed 'sensuous lacquered sculptures' - and comic figuration. The media panned it and the crowds poured in. Appropriately the movement started picking up speed.

The exhibition featured works by seventy artists including Cindy Sherman, Gregory Crewdson, Takashi Murakami, Art Spiegelman, and Ashley Bickerton. The collection was wild at heart, pessimistic, rude, wierd and wonderful. It showed the thriving potential in figurative work and proved that pop iconography, even kitsch, can have an emotional core.

In ArtForum, Steven Henry Madoff wrote: "The mutant sensibility at work in this droll, smartly curated exhibition proposes the marriage of Surrealism's dream-laden fetish for the body eroticized and grotesque and Pop art's celebration of the shallower, corrosively bright world given over to the packaged good".



GREGORY CREWDSON
WINTER, MOTHER ON BED WITH BLOOD



TAKASHI MURAKAMI
ARHAT

Mark Ryden - soon to be hailed "The god-father of Pop Surrealism" by Interview magazine - was notably absent. No matter; that same year he had his solo debut in Pasadena with "The Meat Show" to salivating crowds. The LA Times said his admirers were more like "disciples".

There is faith in this movement and a conviction among the artists that for all its bizarre charm, their work can bear the weight of art history.

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MARK RYDEN
INCARNATION

Why surrealism now? After seeing the 1998 Aldrich exhibition, the Village Voice art critic, Peter Schjeldahl, wrote:

I think human spirits are starting to revolt against a society that has been reducing the credit of inner experience toward zero. Economics, politics, science, technology, academe, the law, and, really, everything conspire to humiliate personal truth. Corporate, media and university cultures presume that human beings are managerial, demographic and ideological units whose residue of unpredictability must soon yield to nicer adjustments of the appropriate methodologies."

Surrealism breaks free of these constraints and its use of the common language of urban iconography serves to tell a bigger, wilder, often darker story about personal truths.



CINDY SHERMAN
UNTITLED

The manufactured narratives that photographer Dina Goldstein creates appear like fairy tales for the real world. Goldstein is part of the second wave of serious artists finding liberation in Pop Surrealism's visual language. Her two published fine art collections - *Fallen Princesses* and *In The Dollhouse* - present alternative narratives for pop cultural characters. Goldstein's work has a comic edge and pops of crude bright color but the images are darkly compelling. Hallucinatory dreams pulling you through the looking-glass but in the other direction: from a place of enchantment to a world with serious challenges.

Goldstein is determined to prove that the plastic arts still have something to show our plastic culture about the truth of what's really going on (a common sentiment among pop surrealists). Her images feel urgent and alive. Like Ryden, her work draws from the daily grind of her workaday life: Ryden came from commercial illustration, Goldstein from photojournalism. Artistry is favoured by such experience. Goldstein has a sharp eye for detail and the theatrical truth in a face or a pose.



DINA GOLDSTEIN
SNOWY

Goldstein's photographs have struck a nerve. Before gaining any gallery representation, Goldstein debuted her *Fallen Princesses* on a photography website and the work quickly went viral. Both series have received widespread social media coverage, been written about for over a hundred international publications and earned academic attention.

In 2013, the Musée de l'Orangerie included Goldstein's photograph *Haircut* in its catalogue for a feature exhibition on Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo proving the vitality - and blessing - of art can reach across generations. And all the better that the conversation between these two female artists is very intimate and personal.

Based in Vancouver, Dina Goldstein is currently represented by galleries and dealers in Europe, Asia, Canada and the US. Her latest publication, *In The Dollhouse*, will be released in Spring 2014.





MARK RYDEN
SAINT BARBIE



DINA GOLDSTEIN
THE DREAM

The lowbrow, NoBrow, New Brow, Neo Pop, Comic Abstraction art that groups together (quite jovially) under the umbrella of Pop Surrealism has cracked open the art world to new means of expressions and a wider audience. By 2009, Juxtapoz had the largest circulation of any art magazine in the U.S. And artists that had once seemed too contrarian – and crazy – for the accepted norms of the artworld establishment have now earned critical favour.

As for the charge that all of this is merely childish, Mark Ryden counters that “It is only in childhood that contemporary society truly allows for imagination”. The world remains wild around us - fantastic and fabulous and flawed - and the Pop Surrealists feel inspired to make something meaningful from all its odd bits. Vive la revolution.

ROBERT WILLIAMS

b. 1943



ENCHILADAS DE AMORE

ROBERT WILLIAMS



MATA HARI

CINDY SHERMAN
b. 1954



UNTITLED #425

CINDY SHERMAN



UNTITLED 224

ART SPIEGELMAN

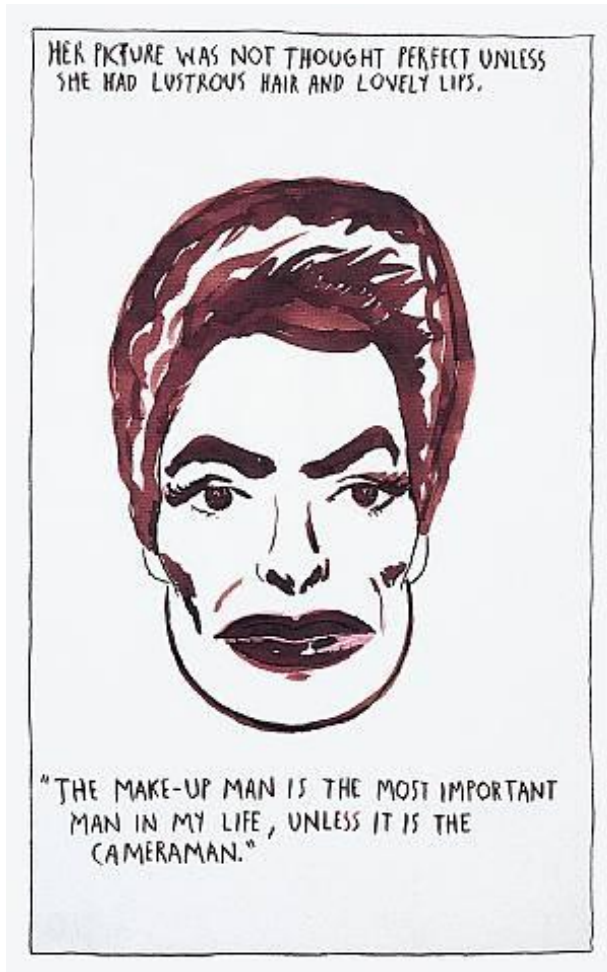
b. 1948



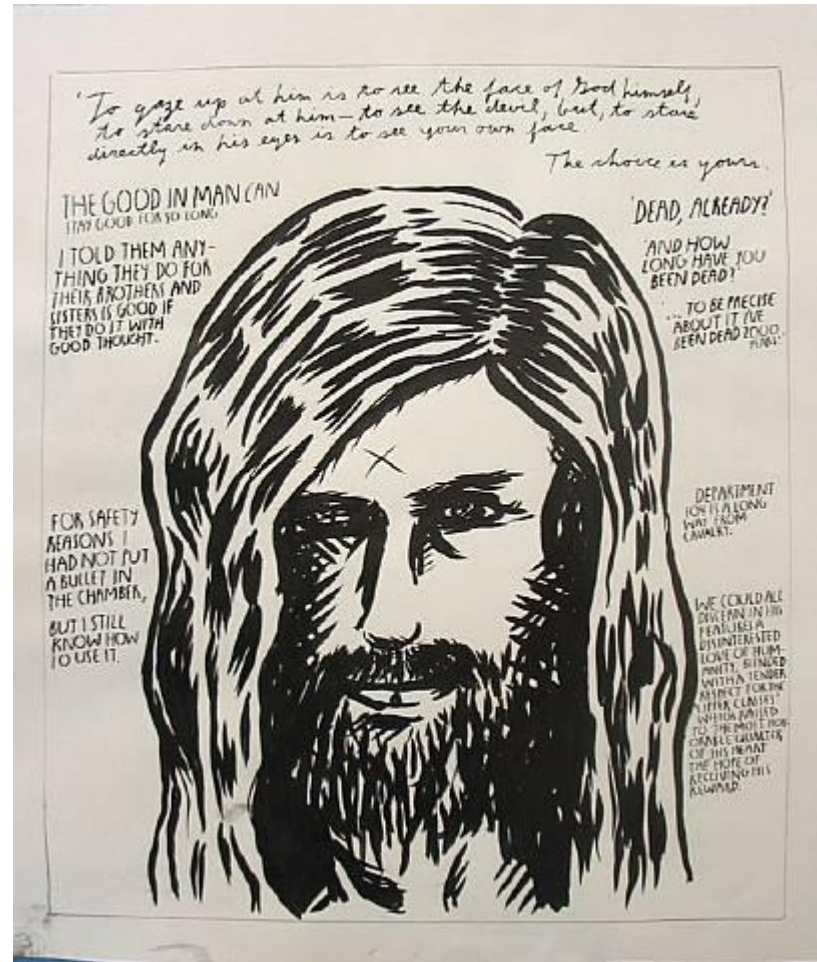
FROM MAUS

RAYMOND PETTIBON

b. 1957



UNTITLED, HER PICTURE WAS



UNTITLED, TO GAZE UP AT HIM

MARK RYDEN
b. 1963



SNOW WHITE

MARK RYDEN



THE MAGICAL CIRCUS

TAKASHI MURAKAMI

b. 1962



SKULLS

TAKASHI MURAKAMI



TAN-BO

TONY OURSLER

b. 1957



BLUE CLASSIC

GREGORY CREWDSON

b. 1962



UNTITLED, SUNDAY ROAST

GREGORY CREWDSON



UNTITLED, BECKONING BUS DRIVER

ASHLEY BICKERTON

b. 1959



UNTITLED

PIERRE ET GILLES

b. 1950 + 1953



UNTITLED

PIERRE ET GILLES



MERCURE

DAVID LACHAPPELLE

b. 1963



THE RAPE OF AFRICA

DAVID LACHAPPELLE



AMANDA

LISA YUSKAVAGE

b. 1962



UNTITLED

DINA GOLDSTEIN
b. 1969



CINDER

DINA GOLDSTEIN



JASMINE

DINA GOLDSTEIN



BREAKFAST TABLE



MARK RYDEN
THE TREE OF LIFE

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Useful Links:

Dina Goldstein
www.dinagoldstein.com

Barry Dumka
www.bcreativehere.com

Juxtapoz Magazine
www.juxtapoz.com

Mark Ryden
www.markryden.com