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By Roberta Smith

## The New York Times

### Rita Ackermann and Harmony Korine

*Swiss Institute*  
495 Broadway, at Spring and Broome Streets  
SoHo  
Through Jan. 29

It makes a certain sense that the New York artist Rita Ackermann and the director (and occasional painter) Harmony Korine, who lives in Nashville, are friends. Their work is similarly improvisational and rough edged and tends to focus on gangs of young people who are up to no apparent good. Ms. Ackermann's paintings are often populated with beves of almond-eyed young women, nude or almost, who loll about, watching. They seem to have wandered in from a cartoon-style Gauguin painting where My Little Pony dolls are not unknown; the densely painted surfaces that they inhabit often give them a slightly diabolical gravity.

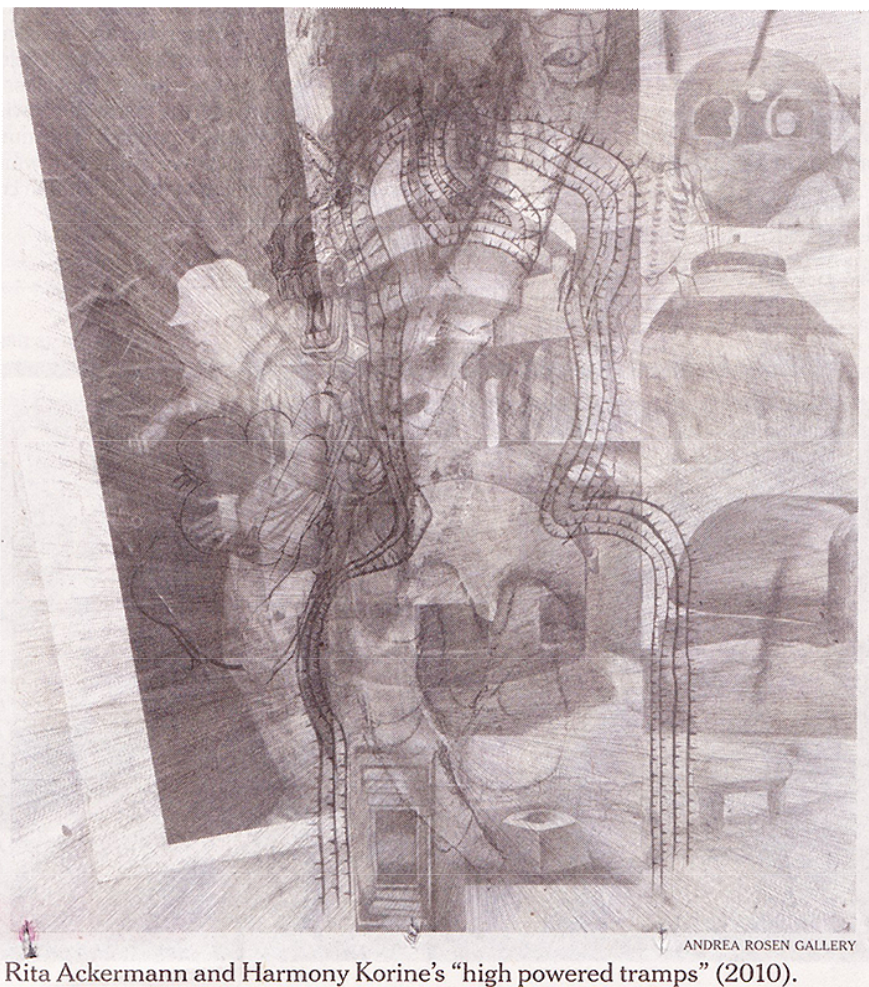
Mr. Korine, first and still best known for his contribution to the screenplay to Larry Clark's 1995 movie "Kids," revels in misbehavior both conventional and genuinely off-putting. A cat or two has died for his art, specifically in his 1997 movie "Gummo." His latest, "Trash Humpers" (2009), follows four geriatric terrors (young actors in masks) as they shamle about Nashville, cackling, interacting with the locals and, as the title implies, feigning sex with garbage containers.

An anything-goes, if somewhat pat, energy pervades the pair's collaborative efforts — a group of large paintings, mostly on vinyl, and sliced-and-diced collages — which are having their debut at the Swiss Institute. The masked figures from "Trash Humpers," blown up to nearly life size, often function as ghosts in busy pictorial machines, sharing space with Ms. Ackermann's young women, tangles of brushwork and drawing, or thick slabs of monochrome. This is most effective in "secret klubs," where Mr. Korine's actors are all but obscured by the painted overgrowth, but counter the tacility with a wonderful ethereality. Equally strong, in a completely different way, is "high powered tramps," where rays of ballpoint-pen lines cast one of Mr. Korine's actors in a lurid nocturnal glow while a series of red shapes, taken from earlier drawings by Ms. Ackermann, suggests oncoming trains.

Too much else here reads as a fairly routine and sometimes quite lazy graft of the two opposing forces of 1980s art — Neo-Expressionist painting and Pictures Art — which weren't so far apart anyway. Outtakes from "Trash Humpers" are projected on the wall of one gallery, accenting the sinister, and displaying a certain debt to the video-performances of Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley (not to mention the photographs of William Eggleston of Memphis).

Nonetheless, the take-away here is that Ms. Ackermann and Mr. Korine make a promising team. The show, whose title can't be printed here, also offers further proof that Ms. Ackermann, who has been evolving her strange art since the early 1990s, is due a survey.

ROBERTA SMITH



Rita Ackermann and Harmony Korine's "high powered tramps" (2010).