

Martin Eder

La Paix du Cul

Marianne Boesky Gallery
535 West 22nd Street, Chelsea
Through July 1

The German artist Martin Eder makes large, splashy, semisurrealistic paintings bringing together images of scantily clad women from pornographic magazines and much enlarged kittens; sometimes the women have grotesquely misplaced limbs. Mr. Eder paints in a slick, Expressionistic manner that is a kind of stylistic equivalent of his kitschy, creepy imagery.

Presumably Mr. Eder is not particularly attracted to pornography or kittens. Like Jeff Koons, he is using banal, commercial clichés to com-

ment on a society driven by infantile desires. Art is implicated: the picture of a sad clown contemplating an absurdly enlarged yellow songbird with human female breasts is a portrait of the artist as the ultimate narcissist. Unlike Mr. Koons's always bright and shiny productions, however, Mr. Eder's scenarios have a nightmarish feeling, which enhances their projection of a frighteningly ungrounded, disproportionate state of yearning that is the not-so-secret engine of capitalist consumerism.

The problem with Mr. Eder's work is not that it flirts with sexism but that it is calculating, obvious and preachy. He is not exploring and discovering his more or less subconscious fears and desires so much as illustrating sociological concepts that he knows all too well. Still, the confluence of Freud and Marx is interesting, and so is the tantalizing perversity, which you'd like to see pushed further into unknown territories.

KEN JOHNSON