

HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

Can Rectal Realism (and Other 1970s Art) Inspire?

by [Emily Colucci](#) on May 20, 2013



The artists of "Fresh Faces from the 1970s": (from left to right) Anton Perich, Marc H. Miller, Colette Lumiere, and Neke Carson. (Photo: Curt Hoppe)

Despite my longtime interest in New York art from the 1970s, I somehow never imagined delving into an artistic process called, quite literally, "rectal realism." However, over a week ago, I found myself in a small room at the Gershwin Hotel at "[Fresh Faces from the 1970s](#)," a film screening and discussion, watching artist [Neke Carson](#) painting "I love you" with a paintbrush shoved in his butt.

Organized by artist and art historian Marc H. Miller, who has emerged with his website [98 Bowery](#) and online gallery [Gallery 98](#) as one of the main supporters of 1970s art, "Fresh Faces from the 1970s" gathered together three artists associated with 1970s downtown Manhattan.

The screening featured performance artist, musician and street artist [Colette](#), who is currently going by the name Colette Lumiere though she has inhabited various personae throughout her career; photographer, digital painter and Public Access-provocateur [Anton Perich](#); and witty artist, musician and rectal-realist painter Neke Carson.

While exhibitions and publications continually revisit art from the 1970s, these three artists, perhaps due to their refusal to be easily slotted into a particular style or movement, are less recognized than some of their peers. Experimental, sometimes filthy and often very fun, the films screened in "Fresh Faces from the 1970s" revealed an era of art-making undeterred by censorship, outrage, or lack of sales, which could and should inspire the artistic practices of today's contemporary artists.

As Marc H. Miller explained in his introduction to the evening:

"We thought we were living in the shadow of the 1960s, but we seemed to have a lot more fun."

Revealing this palpable sense of amusement, the evening began with "A Pirate In Venice" (2012), a film directed by Frederike Shaefer, that both follows Colette as she prepares for a performance at the Venice Biennale in 2011 and presents a loose history of her work. Watching Colette wander around Venice in her strikingly beautiful and slightly intimidating Victorian punk fashion, the film captured her edge and subversiveness, which has influenced pop stars from Lady Gaga to Madonna.

Colette, "A View of the Lips, Street Piece I" (circa 1973) and "The Ear, Street Piece I #8" (1973), from *Postcards From the Story of my Life* (Gallery 98)

"A Pirate In Venice" traces the various incarnations of Colette's artistic practice from her early anonymous street art, in which she painted on the heavily trafficked Manhattan streets, to sleeping in the Clocktower Gallery, to her window installation at Fiorucci. As Colette plays with the appearance of the female body in art history, fashion and popular culture, the film suggests Colette should be placed in the canon of significant women performance artists.

Even the disembodied voice of MoCA director Jeffrey Deitch appears in the film, praising Colette's installation "Real Dream" (1975) at the Clocktower Gallery where she slept nude, surrounded by pink satin. While Tilda Swinton's nap in the MoMA Atrium is certainly the most [publicized](#), Colette deserves credit as the woman who first slept in an art institution as performance forty years ago.

After Colette's fabric-draped performances in "A Pirate In Venice," Anton Perich screened a series of censored clips from his Public Access television show, *Anton Perich Presents*. A precursor to the freedom of YouTube, Public Access television provided a venue for any artist, like Perich, who wanted to publicly air their material. With clips ranging from Colette sleeping in the nude to sketches with Perich's friends, to interviews with the mesmerizingly cranky [Lydia Lunch](#), the Velvet Underground's John Cale, Andy Warhol, and Salvador Dali, Perich's clips illustrated the democratic and accessible social scene and nightlife of the 1970s.

My favorite clip from Perich's collection was undoubtedly a silly sketch featuring drag icon and Warhol beauty Candy Darling with Taylor Mead, poet and star of Andy Warhol's film *Taylor Mead's Ass* (1965), who sadly passed two weeks ago. Raunchy, captivating and thoroughly campy, Mead plays Darling's disgusted and disappointed father, depicting the pervasive sense of fun that Miller attributed to the art of the 1970s.

Last but certainly not the least memorable, Neke Carson, who currently runs the programming at the Gershwin Hotel, presented the film I had been both waiting for and dreading since I received the invitation for the event: Anton Perich's short film from *Anton Perich Presents* (1973) documenting Carson's "rectal realism." Looking to define a new artistic technique separate from hand-eye coordination, Carlson developed "rectal realism," completing hilariously realistic and admittedly quite good paintings of subjects like Fred Flintstone and Andy Warhol.

Luckily, Miller's Gallery 98 made Perich's film available online so I don't have to explain in detail what Carson's method actually entails. As Carson quipped, "You can look away if you want to look away."



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from **Marc H. Miller**