

Time Out New York

Bendix Harms
Anton Kern, through Feb 25
(see Chelsea).

German artist Bendix Harms hits the ground running in his first solo New York show, with Expressionist paintings that have much in common with works by Hamburg-trained Jonathan Meese, New York it girl Dana Schutz and early Donald Baecheler. (The late paintings of the artist's heronemesis Picasso cast a long shadow as well.) Harms's distinctively personal style of representation is, in short, the opposite of the homogeneity served up by the Leipzig school.

Out of all this brutish figuration, an autobiographical strain emerges. The magnetic *Frau Harms* (2005) is a lugubrious, gender-bending self-portrait, rendered in sun-colored encrustations, inky jet-blacks, and shifting pockets of blue-grays. The hands are meaty paws with lightbulb-shaped thumbs that pull back the folds of a trench coat to reveal three sets of pendulous breasts (and a spare). Veinlike lines cascade downwards; one could

be an esophagus, another lungs. While this painting booms its presence in the room, other works have a more mad-cap, agile quality.

In *Zilp Zalppp*, a forest of violets, magentas and grays surrounds little birds perched on a sleeping bag that encases the catnapping artist. Harms's rendering of head, hair, eyebrows, fingers and feet is rudimentary, and slashing brushstrokes convey a rebellious freedom in the painting's coagulated surface.

These are not easy pictures, nor are they intended for quick consumption. Harms's confidence is likely to elicit an emotional response in viewers, which for some may mean dislike. But his disarming sense of humor, action-paint-

ing verve and whimsical narrative are bound to win many people over.

—Max Henry

