

# Flash Art

MARTHA COLBURN

STEFAN STUX GALLERY

Just the name of the show, "Fuk our mutt," clues you in to the perverse cross-species play that goes on in Martha Colburn's riotous, hand-crafted cinematic assaults. Having produced over thirty films in the last ten years, Colburn is the reigning queen of the found-object-animated-collage-film. Hers may not be the stateliest of courts, but that's what makes her sovereign domain one of the most fun. Indeed, Colburn's inclusion in this year's Whitney Biennial, along with her collage-film compatriot, Lewis Klahr, bears out the overdue recognition of their art (and a bow to their cinematic ancestor, Stan VanDerBeek).

Colburn's work has a delightful consistency of iconography cut from magazines and culled from old films. It includes pinup girls, porn stars, pop icons, and all variety of non-speciocratic erotica. She composites these cut-ups into articulated hybrids that invoke what Mikhail Bakhtin called the carnivalesque — the subversive, exhibitionist, topsy-turvy celebration of the grotesque. In the film *Spiders in Love: An Arachnogasmic Musical* (2000), for example, she-spiders possess fellating mouths, smiling eyes, large breasts and eight dancing gartered legs. Cracks in the paint applied directly to the emulsion also form web-like patterns, and a driving soundtrack adds to the raucous, breakneck pace of the images.

In the film *Skelehellavision* (2001), the carnivalesque impulse to turn things inside out is made literal as Colburn painstakingly scratches skeletons onto the bodies of women performing in recycled porn movies and paints spooky skulls on the faces of fantastically vulgar animal/human mash-ups.

Colburn's compelling wall-mounted mixed-media installations include collage elements pulled directly from her films. And, while her films are presented in this show on DVD, it is the 'lo-fi' manipulation of her energetic frame-by-frame animation that is so refreshing in such a digitally dominated moment. The mesmerizing effect of Colburn's layered handwork testifies to the sustained and enduring status of film art in this 'digital age.'

Melissa Friedling

## R E V I E W S



MARTHA COLBURN, *Spiders in Love: An Arachnogasmic Musical*, 2000. Animation on 16 mm hand-colored film (DVD transfer), 3 mins. Courtesy of Stux Gallery, New York.