

OCTOBER 2013

ARTnews

**Keeping
New
Media
New**



**How Hopper
Created
*Nighthawks***

**China's
Growing
Auction Giant**

**Wyeth
Family's
High Point**

Sergei Isupov

Barry Friedman Ltd.

This Russian-born, United States-based artist presented a new body of figurative tabletop-size work in ceramic and porcelain under the title "Call of the Wild." Sergei Isupov's elaborately detailed creations were oddly shaped inter-species creatures covered in surreal narrative details.

Dreamlike visual stories appeared on every surface—even the unseen underside of some works—and each depicted some form of anxiety or mild, often sexual, threat. *The Challenge* (2012) is a vertical male figure in polka-dot shorts shown tussling with a bear in order to get to the black-and-white nude female drawn onto the bear's back. The scratches on the man's back and his frozen grimace convey the intensity of the struggle. As in many of the sculptural works, whimsy is mixed with nightmarish frustration and three dimensions morph into two—and back again. Heads could be seen growing limbs and skin bursting into flames. Deciphering one of Isupov's figures is a futile but tempting assignment that requires prolonged consideration



Sergei Isupov, *The Fear Has Big Eyes*, 2013, porcelain, 21" x 19" x 11". Barry Friedman Ltd.

three-dimensional doll-like woman is standing, as if inside a dreamworld of her own, on his curly tail. The artist's frequent variations in the surface and texture of each work, whether matte or glossy, smooth or covered in bumps, add yet another layer to the expertly realized surprises on display.

—Doug McClelland

and demands the eye keep moving. As in dreams, any left-brained or objective interpretation is thwarted by some other aspect of the intense, often beautiful, illogic of the piece.

The elderly green monkey figure in *The Fear Has Big Eyes* (2013) sports a large white moustache and dangling phallus. His back is "tattooed" with a painted depiction of a man and woman in erotic embrace, and a

'Contained Conflict'

Driscoll Babcock

Visitors to this intense, psychologically charged group exhibition were greeted by 10 ceramic male figures standing at attention on rusted metal plinths. The somewhat baffled-looking young men, created by Israeli artist Varda Yatom, were modeled on wedding cake figurines. Several are wrapped loosely in wire, suggesting the tension young Israeli men experience embarking on domestic life and anticipating military engagement.

Hanging elsewhere in the gallery was an untitled oil-and-encaustic abstraction by Ross Bleckner from 1981, consisting of horizontal black lines that nearly obliterate the white sections behind them; it's a particularly handsome yet fraught image.

Embodying the theme of poetry within strife is Harriet Bart's suite of 10 drawings from a set of 160. Each four-by-four-inch "portrait" was created from the wispy black remnants of candle smoke, and each bears the name of a worker lost in the 1911 New York City fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, one of the deadliest industrial disasters in U.S. history.

Pieter Hugo's pair of large C-prints from 2009–10 showing electronic-waste-filled slums in Ghana is especially affecting. Arguably, however, the most

unsettlingly lovely of the works on view were two ink-jet photographs by Wafaa Bilal. Taken from the artist's "Ashes Series," the dimly lit images depict meticulously detailed dioramic models of locations from the Iraq War. The artist removed the individuals from the original photographs and replaced them with 21 grams of cremated human remains.

A few of the other artists in this moving exhibition were Doug Argue, Paulo Laport, Bahar Behbahani, Margaret Bowland, Marylyn Dintenfass, and Robert Longo.

Each of the artists here mined recent history to discover powerful moments of quiet beauty within situations of stress and strife.

—Doug McClelland



Wafaa Bilal, *The Ashes Series: Chair*, 2003–13, archival ink-jet photograph, 40" x 50". Driscoll Babcock.