

Mother Hood, 2006
lithograph, chine collé, woodcut transfer
15 x 19 inches
Courtesy of Lawrence Lithography Workshop



PEREGRINE HONIG

Peregrine Honig's luscious works have been simultaneously seducing and repelling audiences since she first began widely exhibiting her work as a painting student at the Kansas City Art Institute. A prodigious talent, her delicately rendered figures—generally women on the cusp or first blossom of adolescence—seem to be captured with an almost childlike grace, reflective of the early age at which the artist began demonstrating her gifts as a draftsman. But while her lithe and rosy-cheeked characters may draw us toward their charms, Honig consistently finds myriad ways to render the ugly realities that lurk beneath their alluring façades. Slipping shocking critiques and surprising physiques into her figure studies, she recognizes that “contemporary issues are much more captivating when the victim is portrayed as a modelesque woman.”¹

Since Honig received a Charlotte Street Award in 2000, she has honed her bait-and-switch style. Her 2001–02 series of pinup girls immediately indicated the direction of the artist's interests. A student and fan of pinup history, Honig nonetheless reads in them a dark side of women's sexual and professional lives—a tension she made tangible by pairing figures inspired by classic examples of cheesecake illustration with verses that ask the audience to look closer at details that suggest these figures have been battered, degraded, and exploited by forces outside the picture frame. More recently, and comically, Honig's drawings have included victims of the exponentially expanding beauty industry, as she invents subtly outrageous figures that illustrate modern “illnesses” such as *Silicomania* and *Tanorexia* (both 2005). Also subtle in their grotesque beauty are her recent *Mint Forest* (2003–04) and *Albocracy* (2005) series, in which Honig explores and exaggerates the uncanny allure of fantasy human-animal hybrids and regal albino figures, respectively, to draw attention to the role of the unattainable and extraordinary in our construction of beauty—outlandish ideals that we all too often, and unfairly, project upon our world and ourselves.



Man Horse, 2005
watercolor, pen and ink on paper
11 x 6 inches
Courtesy of the artist

As critic Zane Fischer has astutely noted, Honig's fantastic work in fact “comes from life, from real perceptions of being a woman and a girl, rather than from a masturbatory fantasy where sex and death are the answers to every question.”² A complex brew of wonder and indignation, optimism and melancholy, Honig's deceptively simple work packs a powerful punch.

—Maria Elena Buszek

1. Peregrine Honig, artist statement, April 2002.
2. Zane Fischer, “Drawing for Content,” *San Francisco Reporter*, April 6–12, 2005.