

# Rebecca Morgan

## No Church in the Wild

February 20 - March 29, 2014



**Asya Geisberg Gallery** is pleased to present “No Church in the Wild”, Rebecca Morgan’s second exhibition with the gallery. Whereas her first exhibition “Cabin Fever” presented an array of archetypal Appalachian personages, in “NCITW” Morgan gives us a glimpse of their cultural signifiers and environment. Unruly and uncivilized, her characters epitomize both historic conceptions of Appalachia and its current state of anomie and mass-market tastes combined with off-the-grid lifestyles and abject poverty. To each medium Morgan brings her impressive technique, as life-size self-portraits classically rendered in graphite show the artist’s debt to Rubens or Cranach, and even her darkest pastiches in pen, gouache, or ink provide a delicacy worthy of da Vinci in her rendition of hirsuteness and tooth decay.

Morgan’s backwoods hillbillies, mountain men, and cackling witches congregate in her fertile imagination, feral and independent. “No Church in the Wild” borrows the title of the eponymous song by Jay Z and Kanye West. Morgan sees West’s self-styled renegade persona as a pop-cultural embodiment of the miscreants populating her paintings, who live outside society’s dictums and expectations. Dirty, rugged, high on meth or gas station Cheetos, they are no longer a humorous parody of countryside idylls, but instead touch upon the delinquency and despair of rural life. Morgan’s works are confrontational and jarring, and challenge our paradigms of normalcy.

Building on her repertoire of figurative painting and drawing, Morgan adds ceramic face jugs and hex sign gouaches, both particular to Appalachia and Pennsylvania Dutch country. Morgan’s jugs recall both the tradition of stoneware dedicated to scaring children away from moonshine, and her tender attention to each meticulous snaggletooth, beady eye, and lumpy face found in her cartoons. Each individualized jug is a misshapen symbol of Appalachia – demonic yet appealing even as it makes light of addiction. The hex signs, used traditionally to ward off bad spirits at the farm, quote folk-art abstract geometric pattern also resonant in the faded hand-crafted 70’s quilts the artist frequently depicts. As in all her work, Morgan honors tradition yet remains unafraid to critically distance herself from the culture she knows so well. Her position as the cultured art-school savant exposing the lifestyles of the wild and indolent is undermined at turns when we guess at the poignancy, satirical humor, and underbelly of darkness found in her work.

*Rebecca Morgan received a BA from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania and her MFA from Pratt Institute. Her 2012 solo exhibition at Asya Geisberg Gallery was reviewed in Whitehot Magazine, Beautiful Decay, Artslant, Juxtapoz Magazine, and Berlin’s Lodown Magazine, among others. She is the recipient of a Vermont Studio Center full fellowship, the George Rickey Residency at Yaddo, and has an upcoming residency at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts. Exhibitions include Gasser Grunert Gallery, NY, Richard Heller Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ, Whitdel Arts, Detroit, MI, and an upcoming exhibition “The Monstrous Self” curated by Benjamin Sutton at Spring/Break, New York, NY. Morgan lives and works in central Pennsylvania.*



*Face Jug 3, 2014. Glazed stoneware, 9.5” x 6” x 5.5”.*



*Hummel Hobo Bumpkin, 2014. Oil and graphite on panel, 14” x 12”.*