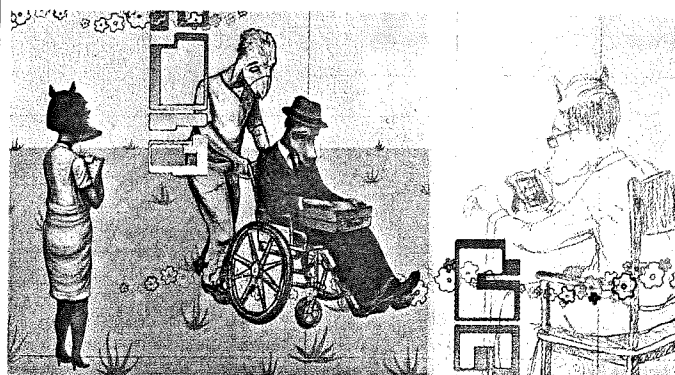


Time Out New York

March 25–April 1, 2004
Issue 443



Kojo Griffin, *Untitled (#5)*, 2004.

Kojo Griffin, "Now and Then" Mitchell-Innes & Nash, through Apr 24 (see Uptown).

How the kids in the painting intuited that a box of porn was squirreled away in the laundry room is a mystery that artist Kojo Griffin does not divulge. But one work in his series "Now and Then" (2004) illustrates the wide-eyed amazement of two preteens—in

the guise of the artist's signature, anthropomorphized animals—as they peruse the stash. Griffin wittily evokes the youths' mental gears in motion by superimposing a garland of seemingly decorative loops that are actually intricately wrought mechanisms of sprockets, wrenches and (get it?) screws.

Each of Griffin's paintings is divided into "before" and "after" sequences

in which a graphite drawing abuts a brightly painted panel. Stylized modernist grids, reminiscent of 1950s and '60s textile design, are intermittently interspersed across the canvases. The mood of each image is suggested by the visual commentary woven throughout. In one work, "before" portrays a smiling bird-woman accepting a martini from a suave teddy bear. But swags of barbed wire foreshadow the "after" scenario: bird-woman, hungover head in hand, stumbling out of the smirking bear's bed.

The allegorical qualities of the ornamental elements supplement Griffin's fablelike scenes. In one melancholy painting, an aged dog-gentleman is wheeled around the grounds of a sanatorium by a bird-orderly, as a cloud of flowery gears injects a bright zone of nostalgia into the almost monochrome canvas. In the accompanying image, the elderly gent grips a cane and bends over a framed portrait. The loneliness and isolation of old age have rarely been so simply—or so eloquently—portrayed.—*Eva Diaz*