

A.K. BURNS CALLICOON

Sex, anatomy, money and imagery are among the themes smartly explored in "pregnant patron penny pot," Brooklyn-based artist A.K. Burns's second solo show. Her first was in 2003; she more often collaborates with other artists, especially A.L. Steiner, with whom she's a cofounding member of the activist group W.A.G.E. (Working Artists and the Greater Economy). They also cocreated *Community Action Center* (2010), a widely praised 69-minute arty lesbian porno.

Burns brings intelligence and humor to her subjects. In a 2011 interview with Rhizome director Lauren Cornell, she asks pithy questions like, "Why are things, shaped the way they are, continually inserted in to our vaginal consumerist reality?" and asserts that "the personal is not only political, but sexual."

The show combined six wall-hung mixed-medium sculptures (all works 2012) with as many floor sculptures; the two groups engaged in a subtle dialogue. The wall works feature found images (most of them from the New York Public Library Picture Collection) printed on roughly 14-by-11-inch pieces of canvas. Each was attached to the wall by a penny stuck partway into a groove that had been dug into the drywall surface.

The canvas hangs limply around the penny, forming unmistakably labial shapes that obscure some of the images; visitors were permitted to lift the folds for better viewing. In combination with the usual prohibition against touching art, it was all likely to make a viewer blush.

But not the imagery, which is (usually) pretty civilized. The punningly titled *In Labor* shows placard-bearing workers on strike. *On Our Knees* visually rhymes a photo of female workers kneeling in the dirt at an archeological dig and one of a woman in bondage gear on hands and knees, a pane of glass placed on her back to create a table. Extending the rough play is *Figuratively*, which, if you lift the canvas, reveals an image of a bondage chair designed to look like a woman's legs.

On the floor rested five minimalist formica-clad wood sculptures, ranging



A.K. Burns: *Window in My Way*, 2012, penny, inkjet image transfers on vinyl-coated canvas, 14 by 11 by 4½ inches; at Callicoon.

from 2 to 5 feet high. They recall, at times, Sol LeWitt works, but resurfaced by some misguided interior decorator. A block-letter-C-shaped example with a small bar doglegging out from the bottom is fittingly called *Hooker*, while another that forms an open rectangle is inaptly dubbed *Like a Rock*. ("It's more like a hole," gallery owner Photios Giovanis pointed out to me.) If many of the floor sculptures largely offered subtly phallic rejoinders to the wall works' female genitalia, *Like a Rock* and *Ooh!*, standing just over 4 feet and forming narrow vertical frames, seemed to conjoin masculine and feminine: erect and firm but defined as much by cavity as by matter.

Rounding out the show was an altered 2-foot-tall found porcelain vase, *By Any Means Necessary*. Burns broke the vase in half and then reconstructed the lost part with concrete, lashing the halves together with tape, filling in gaps with foam and epoxy. It's a beautiful, funny mess. This work seems driven by any means necessary to rejoin two halves torn asunder.

—Brian Boucher