

METRO PICTURES

Farago, Jason. "Critics' Picks," *Artforum* (February 17, 2014).

ARTFORUM



View of "Bad Conscience," 2014.

Group shows curated by artists have a grand history—think of the 1863 Salon des Refusés, the 1913 Armory Show, Duchamp's Surrealism exhibition of 1938—but nowadays are too often hazy exercises that jauntily wear their lack of curatorial structure as an unwarranted badge of honor. All credit, therefore, to the artist John Miller, who has organized this cohesive, if bitter, exhibition on sin, estrangement, and struggle in life and art. Several of the fifteen artists here have collaborated with Miller before; others are his former students; one, Aura Rosenberg, is his wife.

The forthright, sometimes nasty imagery in this tightly hung show (sixty-five works) testifies to a unity across generations, as if for Miller alienation and addiction are built into the artistic temperament. You see that in Frank Lutz's series of paintings of sprawling drunk women and Leigh Ledare's perverse photographs of his mother in lingerie, one of which has been defaced by a child's colored squiggles. Lyle Ashton Harris captures the show's tone of inexorable depravity with a photo of what looks like a list of New Year's resolutions: "No unsafe sex," "No substances," "More yoga," it reads, but the paper is torn and frayed, suggesting that none of those promises were kept.

In and among these biting works are restrained, sensitive figurative paintings by two elder figures, cunningly leavening the exhibition's general vice. Marilyn Minter, now best known for her color-drenched, fashion-driven compositions, contributes five paintings from the 1970s depicting a linoleum floor or curving scraps of paper with stunning frankness. And Walter Robinson, a Pictures generation champion who's still one of the most underrated artists in town, ties the show together with both disquieting early paintings of stuffed animals and newer ones whose subject matter is unwholesome in its own way: an oozing Whopper from Burger King, say, or bottles of Johnny Walker lined up like soldiers.