

Ignatz Mouse: How can you write to yourself and not know what you're writing?

Krazy Kat: Because I'm writing a 'sikrit' to myself –

It is with great pleasure that Corbett vs. Dempsey introduces Interventionist Demonstration (Why-A-Duck?), by Charline von Heyl. This is the first solo exhibition of von Heyl's work in Chicago.

Based in New York and Marfa, Texas, born and raised in Germany, von Heyl is one of the most mercurial voices in painting today. With an infinitely mutable approach that uses form as a hermeneutic crowbar, she has established in her extensive oeuvre an appetite for challenge and obstacle, identifying and liquidating apparent dichotomies of grace and awkwardness, aggression and beauty, figuration and abstraction. "I stumble over something and then I explore that," she told Art News last year. "I push things so that I will stumble into something new. I push things to the point where I have no idea what's going to happen."

For her Corbett vs. Dempsey debut, von Heyl has created quite an unexpected treat: a huge, muralesque canvas and a large cluster of immaculate little paintings on board. The large work, some 17-feet wide, was a surprise, a shock even, to the artist; painted in Marfa, it started as a text painting, with dozens of bumper-sticker-like banners filled with phrases, all painted as if they were plastered over a gorgeous gestural abstraction. Working on these, at a point she decided to obscure the language, rendering it more oblique and mysterious, a semiotic tease or perhaps a secret to herself. With a plastic vocabulary that refers to Futurism and abstract expressionism, but with the singular and unmistakable sensibility of von Heyl, the painting is unique in her work, at once a departure and an extension. The 40 small paintings serve as a counterpoint to this monumental statement. Quick, brilliant, painted in black and white acrylic, many of them are likewise derived from language, distorting words or letters into a nearly decipherable alternate lexicon.

In the East Wing, as a specific complement to von Heyl's work, for your dining and dancing pleasure, Corbett vs. Dempsey presents a single 1934 page of Krazy Kat, the seminal comic by George Herriman: "Today, the world walks in beauty." Equal parts existential philosopher and avant-garde line-artist, Herriman paved the way for the most inquisitive comic artists of the last 50 years.

Charline von Heyl's Interventionist Demonstration (Why-A-Duck?), is accompanied by a full-color 56-page catalog, with a selection of text fragments appropriated from Krazy Kat.

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