

Taylor Mead

CHURNER AND CHURNER

205 10th Avenue

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A skull-sized dent in the canvas of *Andy as the Odalisque*, 1994, is just about level with Warhol's head in Taylor Mead's portrait of his influential friend and collaborator (Mead starred in a number of early Warhol films). But the painting loses none of its camp or neo-Expressionist charm to this accidental feature—Warhol's dashed-off form is a rosy, abstract bulwark with a soup can and flowers perched nearby. His signature mop of hair is rendered in greenish iridescent plumes applied straight from the tube. The other paintings made between 1974 and 1994 grouped in the gallery's back room—portraits, landscapes, and wild animals—share the humor and flamboyance of Mead's *Andy*, as well as its poor condition. The discoloration and telltale speckles of roach infestation are credited to decades of storage in his Lower East Side apartment. Mead, eighty-seven, a poet as well as a painter and veteran of underground cinema, asked the audience at his extremely brief reading during the show's opening reception to wish him luck—his landlord is trying to evict him, he said, on the grounds that his extensive personal archive is a health hazard.

In the front room, in contrast to his battered paintings, Mead's recent illustrations for his ever-evolving *Fairy Tale Poem* sparkle in their bright white frames. The black ink drawings and hand-written text are executed with elegant haste and sparingly colored—with daubs of red, for example, in the death-match between prince and monster ("THEY BOTH LOST!"). The pages of the nihilistic story also pose as a storyboard for a film or a play, the final drawing displaying the actors' credits. Mead has given the role of the castle, left vacant with the demise of its owner, to Donald Trump; the tragic princess put up for rent at the story's end is played by Ellen Barkin; the prince can be "whoever." It's perhaps no surprise that Mead, a character so gracefully hilarious across disciplines, should be a genius of casting as well.



Taylor Mead, *Fairy Tale Poem*, sheet 8 (*They both lost!*), 2012, ink and acrylic on paper, 28 1/2 x 20 5/8".

— Johanna Fateman