

CHURNER *and* CHURNER

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VOICE

Best in Show: Gone Vicious

By **Rob Shuster** Wednesday, Jan 9 2013

Nils Karsten: 'Suburbia Hamburg 1983

The woodcut might seem like a rather staid choice for relating memories of punk rock, but in Nils Karsten's hands, the old-fashioned printing technique—German in origin—neatly evokes the raw energy of the music scene the artist encountered as a teen in [Hamburg](#). In one series, Karsten has created giant versions of old album covers. Carved into table-size squares of plywood with dental drills, and then inked onto big squares of paper, the stark, outsize images shout as loudly as the bands did. Those burning police cars that advertised the [Dead Kennedys'](#) 1980 debut record now carry a jolting, dreamy menace. Enlarged, that bygone nihilism rushes back.



Elsewhere, brief paragraphs recalling significant episodes from the era—also printed from handmade blocks—seem to emerge in their frames from the haze of time. Wood-grain marks, resembling the scratches on old film, surround the blunt bulletins (the suicide of [Joy Division's Ian Curtis](#), the arrest of the [Clash's Joe Strummer](#)) with that cinematic sense of the past.

Karsten again summons the death of Curtis in a provocative poster that features a woman's eyes being stretched wide by a pair of male hands. Two phrases, spelled backward, sandwich her fright: "Licht und Blindheit," a Joy Division single that means "light and blindness," and "Sister Midnight," the [Iggy Pop](#) song reportedly playing when Curtis's body was discovered. Photo collages in the manner of Stan VanDerBeek shift the style into surrealism and include, among other amusing visions, the exorcism of [Sid Vicious](#). *Churner and Churner*, 205 Tenth Avenue, 212-675-2750, [churnerandchurner.com](#). Through February 2