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## STEVE GIANAKOS: NEW PAINTINGS

April 2012 [Written by Chris Bors](#) [0 Comments](#)

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### Fredericks & Freiser, New York City

Although there is a certain retro-chic to Steve Gianakos's black and white acrylic paintings, their x-rated and provocative content trumps their formalist structure and takes you out of your comfort zone, potentially causing some viewers to utter their safe-word, at least in their head. The paintings present imaginary scenarios of children, animals and adults engaging in naughty acts of sex or drug use with some violence thrown in for good measure, rendered in a style similar to 1950s children's books. Whether or not your opinion changes of his work after knowing his age—Gianakos is 74—this collection of paintings, as well as his previous show at Fredericks & Freiser in 2009, sees him turning it up a notch in terms of their, ahem, thrust.



Steve Gianakos, *She Came In a Creamy Sauce With a Hint of Lemon*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 48" x 36"  
 Courtesy of Fredericks & Freiser

*There Was Nothing More He Could Do to Impress Her* (all works 2011), for example, shows a young lad in a chicken coop having his way with the subjugated wildlife while three children peek through a window smiling at the shameless display of bestiality. A companion piece of sorts, *The Farm Had Been Rescinded Just a Month Earlier*, depicts a girl with Kewpie doll style eyes reverse straddling a line of pigs that are eating out of a trough, while getting stimulated by one of their tails as a bird, cat and rooster look on. These scenes, which resemble panels from Tijuana Bibles that have been blown-up to poster-size proportions or warped cartoon versions of Japanese Shunga prints of copulating lovers, might be considered offensive if they weren't so utterly ridiculous. Compared to the hard core pornographic content regularly available online, Gianakos's work could almost be described as quaint. Almost.

The best works display an unlikely combination of the mundane and the profane, including *She Came In a Creamy Sauce With a Hint of Lemon*. It portrays a freckle-faced teen girl with pigtails and a peace symbol necklace in a McDonalds cap snorting a line of coke in front of a rectangular fish bowl. The fishbowl motif, which appears in several pieces, gives the work more visual interest, although the main attention is of course on the illicit act. The bold outlines that Gianakos uses to represent the figures and objects in his compositions are carefully balanced, with rectangular areas of solid black that act as design elements, which the fishbowl could also be described as, since there is little connection between it and the fast-food worker doing lines of blow with a striped straw. A similar work, *Her Perfectly Tapered Legs More Than Made up for Her Under Developed Chest*, includes a much younger girl also partaking of the white powder, with the bars of a bird cage dividing the composition in half vertically, functioning in the same way as the fishbowl. Not that this is necessarily his goal, but since Gianakos cannot possibly compete with extremely shocking viral videos like *2 Girls 1 Cup*, his drawing and design skills make or break these paintings, and for the most part they make it.

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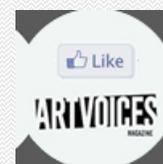
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