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October 2012 Written by Chris Bors 0 Comments

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CENTRAAL MUSEUM · Utrecht, NL

If one expected total anarchy from an exhibition about punk rock in the Netherlands and abroad during 1977 to 1984, they might have been a tad disappointed, but *God Save the Queen: Punk in the Netherlands 1977-1984* at the Centraal Museum proved to be an entertaining if somewhat overwhelming grouping of works related to this pivotal scene. Given the mixing of archival material such as concert flyers, T-shirts, and records, with paintings, sculptures, and videos, it was hard at times to distinguish what was an authentic part of the scene and what was a curatorial intervention or afterthought. Although a few tenuous connections were made, many surprises were in store for those unfamiliar or too young to be part of this period in time.



Henk Visch, *Black Man*, 1981, and Sandra Derk and Rob Scholte's *Rom 87*, 1981–82, installation view, "God Save the Queen."
PHOTO BY CHRIS BORS

First, a few missteps: Robert Longo's lithographs of dancing, well-dressed clubgoers, *Men in the Cities (Eric)*, 1985, and *Men in the Cities (Gretchen)*, 1985, didn't seem to fit at all, looking more like new wave or club culture than punk. Other questionable inclusions included Joop van Lieshout's sculpture *Grindstone*, 1983, made from sheet iron, sandstone, and fiberglass. While the wall text described it as an example of a "personal, self-designed world" and of self-sufficiency, this odd, earthy contraption resembled something more like a garden

ornament from Pottery Barn than anything you'd find at CBGB's.

The inclusion of paintings by Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat was definitely in line with the era, although Haring is usually more associated with club culture and gay pride. Another noteworthy inclusion was the science fiction-inspired mixed-media paintings by fellow New Yorker, Rammellzee, who died in 2010 and who besides being a painter and graffiti writer was a seminal hip-hop artist whose 12-inch record *Beat Bop* featured a cover by Basquiat.

Strong contributions from Dutch artists included Sandra Derk and Rob Scholte's sizable cartoony collage-style painting on multiple pieces of paper *Rom 87*, 1981–82, based on images taken from coloring books. As a bizarre side note, the controversial Scholte lost his legs in a violent incident in 1984, when a grenade exploded under his car, possibly placed by someone jealous of his success.

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One-upping Andy Warhol as far as assassinations attempts go, in 1985 Scholte had a Molotov cocktail thrown through his house window, but survived. Henk Visch's neo-primitive figurative sculptures *Untitled (The Giant)*, 1982, and *Black Man*, 1981, seem influenced by African or Oceanic art, and their otherworldly presence reminds one of the wearable fabric Soundsuits of Nick Cave.

Ultimately the documentary material, including the photographs by Max Natkiel of the punks who attended Amsterdam's Paradiso club from 1980 to 1985, stand out and seem more relevant than much of the painting and sculpture on view. The fanzines, posters, clothing, and music, in the end, were the life's blood of the scene, and therefore remain the most authentic artifacts of a movement whose volatility shares some traits with our current time of uncertainty; an era that needs some shaking up of its own.

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