

David Ebony's Top 10 New York Gallery Shows for November

David Ebony, Friday, November 21, 2014

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Susan Te Kahurangi King, *Untitled* (1970).
Courtesy of Andrew Edlin.

10.) Susan Te Kahurangi King at Andrew Edlin, through December 20

Marking her US solo debut with this exhibition, Susan Te Kahurangi King, a self-taught artist from New Zealand, caused a stir when her works first appeared at last year's Outsider Art Fair in New York. The second of 12 children born in 1951 into a New Zealand family residing in Te Aroha, a small farming community on New Zealand's North Island, King stopped speaking at the age of four, and expressed herself only through drawing. Her parents sought medical help, but little was understood about her condition.

The small-scale drawings she produces are disproportionately astounding. The examples on view here, densely packed compositions, some in color, others black-and-white, feature meticulous renderings and wild distortions of popular cartoon characters like Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. The figures' heads and bodies are often violently mutated and compressed into improbable configurations. Often the figures are arranged in rhythmic patterns, emanating from the lower right corner to the upper left. There is a lyrical elegance to the works, as well as a manic energy—obviously a bit of anger, too. Some works recall de Kooning, Jim Nutt or Carroll Dunham, but in her isolation, King would be unaware of any of these artists. Her work is beguiling and engaging completely on its own terms.