

## 'Empty Nest'

Nathan A. Bernstein & Co.

Curator Lowell Pettit based this show on the premise that children all but vanished from the art of the 20th century—done in by the Cubists, Dadaists, Surrealists, Abstract Expressionists, Pop artists, and Minimalists. Subtitled "The Changing Face of Childhood in Art, 1880 to the Present," the exhibition posed the question, where have they all gone? The better question might have been, what became of them?

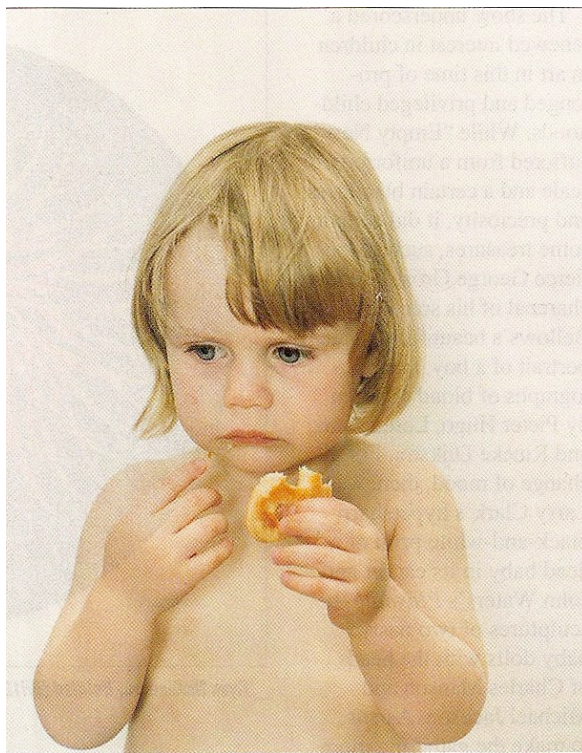
Pettit made a determined effort to fill every bit of wall space in this up-town gallery. Part of the fun was to consider not only what was included but what might have been—a task well suited to armchair curating. Many of the works here were delightful, representing a cross-section of art history, from Renoir, Picasso, Käthe Kollwitz, and Joseph Cornell to contemporary artists, who accounted for more than half of the 50 works on view.

The show underscored a renewed interest in children in art in this time of prolonged and privileged childhoods. While "Empty Nest" suffered from a uniformity of scale and a certain blandness and preciousness, it did contain some treasures, such as the fierce George Grosz's tender charcoal of his son, George Bellows's beautifully painted portrait of a boy, and photographs of blond children

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by Pieter Hugo, Loretta Lux, and Rineke Dijkstra. For a change of mood, there was Larry Clark's hypersharp black-and-white print of a dead baby in its casket and John Waters's *Playdate*—sculptures of two nasty baby dolls with the heads of Charles Manson and Michael Jackson. Asians, to make the gathering more global, were represented by Mr. and Zhang Xiaogang of "Bloodline" fame. All in all, the show played out an intriguing idea.

—Lilly Wei



Rineke Dijkstra, *Floor, Amstelveen, the Netherlands, April 9th, 1995*,  
C-print, 44 7/8" x 38 1/2".  
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