

Reviews

Chris Hipkiss

★★★★★

Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, through Aug 30 (see Museums & Institutions).

If Henry Darger's Vivian Girls grew up to be SuicideGirls, the results might look like Chris Hipkiss's dystopian illustrations of a kinky world at war. Intuit presents 18 pencil drawings that the self-taught, fortysomething English artist and environmental activist (who now lives in France) completed between 1991 and 2007. Each portrays a half-rural, half-industrial landscape full of hipster women. Clad in skimpy punk outfits and armbands with triangular icons, they engage in a violent struggle that Hipkiss never explains.

The artist usually perches his sexy heroines atop skyscraper-shaped pedestals or places them amid rows of overgrown crops and desolate factories. Hipkiss excels at melding organic and machine imagery in dynamic ways: The pipes and wires snaking from various structures look alive, while the black, white and gray palette gives his spiky plants the appearance of metal. Squadrons of birds and insects swoop through most of the drawings like fighter jets; the projectiles flying through the air could be bullets or seeds.

Hipkiss's ambiguity can be irritating: Viewers will be so busy wondering, "Why does he write 'VOTO[X]' everywhere—even on sheep? Whom are the women fighting? Why are they fighting in fishnets?" that they may miss the many exquisite details the drawings contain. Yet Hipkiss's barcode signature and the ominous, billboard-size words ("HATE," "RUINOUS") mounted throughout his landscapes suggest he's depicting a consumer society in decline—with cheesecake to spare.—*LW*



Chris Hipkiss, *A Little Walk Lark in August* (detail), 1997.