

Stories photocopied from this summer's New York Times 'Metro' section and included in this exhibition note that veteran New York prostitutes are driven out of Manhattan by 'crackstitutes' who work longer hours and turn tricks more cheaply. As a result the veterans have decided to move to New Jersey and set up where they can be left to get on with it in the pedestrian free anonymity of semi trailer parks and highway exit ramps. This, it turns out, oddly echoes what artists were doing ten years ago. Jersey City in the early 1990's was, as this exhibition reveals, home to a strange pool of organic life. Wallace Stevens describes it a place where 'the deer and dachshund were one', an antidote to New York City, a romantic wasteland where people would end up without really knowing why. Ellen Cantor and Joseph Grigley's collaboration is a vividly personal account. It records a time when both artists were walking among the matzo factories and Maxwell House coffee plant. 'Lost in Jersey City' documents their return visits to the fugitive city. The exhibition sees Grigley and Cantor's friendship evolving over a period of ten years, their lives bumping along in a series of encounters, at the Flamingo Diner, in photographs, and paintings, but mainly in an extended written exchange. Grigley, who is deaf, has since 1994 been archiving his everyday conversations, with pieces of paper on which are written flusters, random sentences to his friends. Around the same time Cantor abandoned oil painting to develop the subject of her intimate life in drawings on paper or directly on the wall, with peeled consciousness honesty. The exhibition includes a raft of curling, handwritten notes with formal gallery text introductions. In *Untitled Conversations (I hate Undertipping)* (1995) Grigley notes, 'I met Ellen C a couple of years ago, and one of the things I really liked about her is her uninhabited way of using words [...] a lot of people aren't afraid to speak their mind, but to write your mind takes a different kind of effort.' Grigley, it turns out is rioting in understatement as Cantor goes on to scribble in a don't-know-where-to-look way: 'I am his wife and wish you brought him home for me to fuck.'

Central to the exhibition is Cantor's 'The Cinderella Syndrome' (1994), a series of 64 drawings that set out the progress of an art world girl who not only wants to go to the ball, but also wants to get balled. It is a disconcerting mix of identifications, embodiment and emotional signposts. In a sense or ardent triple fallatio the thought bubble notes, 'She loved him carefully + skillfully as lovers from long ago had taught her to do.' Over the years Cinderella has been through a lot of reinterpretations by the porno industry. Cantor's version is what happens if you give her a Don Juan complex, take out the choice of either or and replace it with a barhopping search for a prince. It is also lambent with regret, on one occasion noting: 'I think of you often. I do, you were wonderful, you still are.'

Cantor's work unsettles assumptions about pornography, annexing a graphic language of iconic Disney figures such as Snow White and Bambi and them embodying and personalizing them to the point where characters take on the role of emotional substitute. In New York terms this is like excavating the new 42nd street, where underneath the sanitized studio owned malls lurks the relics of a suppressed sex industry. Cantor's work is prickly for a lot of viewers – anti censorship. There is repetitive imagining of penetrations and cum shots, a reengineering of female representations of eroticism. But the ongoing dialogue with Grigley has broadening and expansive effect.

There is a third voice in this exhibition provided by Grigley's The Battcock Archive (2003), a stack of papers belonging to the 1970's New York book publisher, author and the star of Andy Warhol's film *Horse* (1965), *Drunk* (1965) and *Eating too Fast* (1966). Grigley discovered Gregory Battcock's archive when he shared a warehouse building with the splendidly named Shalom Moving and Storage Company at 111 Frist St, Jersey City. Battcock was murdered in his tenth floor condo in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1980. In the abandoned archive, strewn across the floor of Shalom's offices, were the manuscript of his bitter, unpublished, art world novel and three issues – the only ones produced – of *Trylon and Perisphere* (1977-8), an unfeasibly funny culture magazine that features male swim-suited Hispanic cover models who write forewords for each issue, full of useful domestic advice on house cleaning, car maintenance and cooking rice and beans. Each issue rates galleries with a star system for décor, canapés, cleanliness, lighting and attire of personnel. Its tone is so displaced that if it had not been written in Jersey City, it should have been. So while Robert Smithson's essay 'A tour to the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey' (1967) romanticizes the outfalls and the dumps, making it the eternal city to succeed Rome, one side-effect of this exhibition is to enshrine Jersey City, Passaic's neighbor, as the capitol of the temporal.