



Rick Prol, *S.O.S.*, 1985, acrylic and wood on canvas, 112 by 163 inches. Hal Bromm.

RICK PROL

Hal Bromm

PROL continues to fashion hysterical scenes of grotesque violence in a cartoon-like style reminiscent of German Expressionism. In the new works, as in the old, attenuated, brutalized figures patrol burned-out ghettos, alternately wreaking havoc with psychopathic gusto and writhing in convulsive agony. One figure savagely pounds a nail into a detached head, while another, gagging on a plumbing fixture, vomits blood. The anorexic punkette of *S.O.S.* vainly pedals a bike in a noxious

quagmire. Displaying dangerous pointy breasts and dangling the severed head of her presumably male prey, Prol's femme fatale seems undisturbed by her slimy predicament. Not that she has anywhere to go anyway—she is bounded on one side by a radioactive East River with a collapsed Brooklyn Bridge and on the other by an incinerated Lower East Side.

The artist's postnuclear no-man's land offers no possibility of communication, no sexual gratification except through orgiastic violence. Like their cinematic cousins, the paintings dramatize the tenuously repressed drives and attendant anxieties of adoles-

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*The Sleep Of Reason
Produces Monsters*

cence in a schematic opera of manic aggression and violence.

While the subject matter Prol dishes out looks like a jazzed-up helping of the same old stuff, formally the works have become more considered. Paintings now reflect an increased awareness of structure; passages of acidic color surrounded by polluted grays not only are visually more forceful but help to establish pictorial space and compositional unity; surface and line are richer and more varied. The urban detritus—grim lathing, nail-studded window frames, broken glass—that Prol used as decor in installations now cleverly frames several works.

Unfortunately, subject matter fails to keep pace with technical advance. Prol's imagery, too ephemeral to sustain prolonged viewing, lacks the sophistication now apparent in the paintings' formal elements.

—N.G.