

Derosia

John Belknap, Frieze, June 23, 2022

# FRIEZE

## Sam Lipp's Tasteful Titellations

At Derosia, the artist presents a body of work that stirs both our commercial and corporeal desires.

by John Belknap



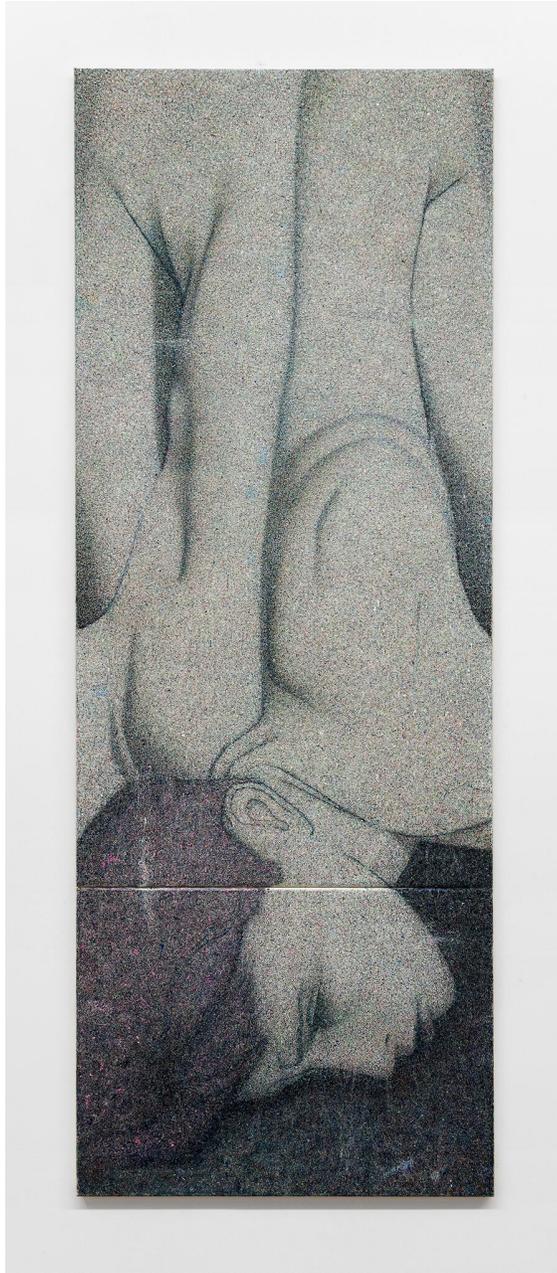
Sam Lipp, *Pollution twink*, 2022, oil on steel and screws, 48 × 58 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Derosia Gallery, New York

The adorable youth in Sam Lipp's self-portrait *Pornocracy* (2021) titillates, tastefully. Better, maybe: he fascinates by plumbing the aesthetics of pornography. Sam's lips spread open. A few teeth peek out from his misty mouth, and to the left glows the underside of his white button nose. Above these, a single shut eye: a lone black crack in the smooth surface of his face, which resembles a ball of brioche dough. It folds limply into his armpit where his left tricep meets his ribcage. Further down, towards his waist, you'll soon discover his awesome arse slope. The fleshy arch appears at the canvas's centre, disappearing again off its right-hand edge.

Lately, Lipp has taken to regularly depicting dough-faced rent boys. For his solo show at Derosia, 'Leaving the Factory', Lipp hunts and gathers images of youthful male hustlers from print magazines and websites. Once niche, the assortment of gay imagery he culls from is now instantly accessible to us, thanks to the way pornography governs our parasocial, post-internet lives. Anyone with a camera can transform into a pornstar. Perhaps this is what is meant by the title of Lipp's two self-portraits, *Pornocracy* and *Pornocracy 2* (2022). Both paintings are characterized by a humourless intent to turn the self into a porn star in order to stimulate something erotic. Both self-portraits capture Lipp arse up, split open off-frame, begging to be (ful)filled.

## Derosia

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Sam Lipp, *Pornocracy 2*, 2022, oil on steel 168 × 61 × 2 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Derosia Gallery, New York

The rent boys Lipp has painted and drawn for works in this exhibition include reproductions from all sorts of archives. The artist's sources range from vintage Eastern European smut (*Pollution twink*, 2022), personal ads from RentMen.com (*Sortie de l'Usine*, 2020), and the artist's own in-person encounters, as evinced by works such as *Patrick's Chest* (2022). The latter is a pencil-on-steel drawing that depicts a twink's towering concave torso. *Patrick's Chest* is sculpted by thousands of shiny crosshatches and shows off Lipp's assiduous eye for detail. On *Patrick's chest* are two misaligned nipples, a belly button and the tip of an elastic waistband. There is no logo on this underwear, so here the man's body becomes the brand – it's not his undergarments but his exposed body that stirs both our commercial and corporeal desires.

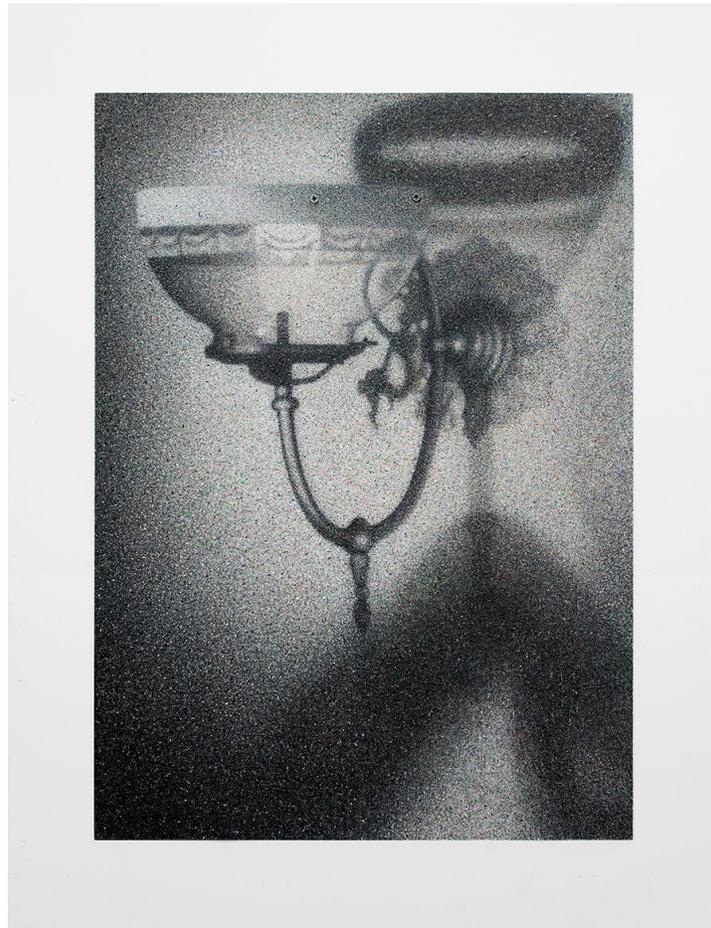
## Derosia

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Alongside the images of men are paintings of a lamp (*Gaslight*, 2021–22), and a series of works that reference the form of road signs. The signs hang from screws drilled directly into the gallery wall; most come as up-pointing triangles painted in speckled neon pink and silver. While driving, it's common to pull up and slowdown in response to a down-pointing triangular sign that signals 'YIELD'. Conversely, an up-pointing triangle road sign screams '!', meaning a danger point approaches. One can only wonder whether the reverse of a YIELD sign, like Lipp's pink-triangle painting (which shares its title with that of the exhibition), might be one that says 'COME!'

The signs, like several of their counterpart pieces depicting rent boys, are painted in layers on steel sheets. These layers are applied via flicks of a steel-wool paintbrush, giving the images a digital, bitmap/retro pointillist feel. Several of Lipp's blissed-out boys you've probably seen around before. They are the boys who can give you that same old blood rush with just a new kind of touch. As a matter of fact, give a rent boy a few hundred bucks and they'll serve you anything you want, from the most surreal fantasies to the ultimate boyfriend experience. Pornocracy promises so much.

*Sam Lipp's 'Leaving the Factory' is on view at Derosia, New York, until 25 June.*



Sam Lipp, *Gaslight*, 2021–2022, oil and prismatic film on steel and screws, 74 × 53 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Derosia Gallery, New York