

R.C. Baker

'Fuck for Peace: A History of the Fugs'
Printed Matter
195 Tenth Avenue
Through September 8

The Dope-Thrill Fugs

Celebrate Independence Day with flagrant free speech and populist ridicule of the ruling class at this bracing exhibition of protest ephemera. An example of the former: songwriter Ed Sanders's 1967 poetry collection, *Fuck God in the Ass*; of the latter: a photo of Nelson Rockefeller flipping the bird, which adorns the cover of bandmate Tuli Kupferberg's *Less News-poems*, a chapbook that sold for "70 cents (2 for 69)." With music self-described as "anti-war/anti-creep/anti-repression" and "dope-thrill chants," the Fugs (whom Lester Bangs characterized as "not a garage band so much as a sixth-floor walkup



Jan Persson

**"A sixth-floor walkup band":
The Fugs in Sweden, 1968**

band") represented a major fault line in the cultural tectonics of the '60s. Somehow they signed with Frank Sinatra's Reprise label, though they often parodied the hep cats of yore (Kupferberg did a rousing rendition of the "Goldfinger" theme, substituting "Stink-fingaaaaah..."). It's fascinating to see the men's magazine *Cavalier* present the band in East Village dishabille near an ad touting a swell in top hat and tails fondling a "Life-Size Instant Party Doll." The times were certainly a-changin', and in that grim year of 1968, with the Vietnam War grinding on and Nixon newly elected to lead it, one reviewer, a World War II vet, confessed to surprised admiration for the group in an article headlined "Cause to Worry: Fugs Make Sense." Album covers such as *Star Peace* anticipated the Day-Glo tubular stylings of the Blue Man Group, while *It Crawled Into My Hand*, *Honest* features Wagnerian costumes worthy of Bugs Bunny's "What's Opera, Doc?" Just as wandering through Rome's Santa Maria del Popolo, surrounded by Caravaggios and Carracis, can sweep you back to the Baroque era, this bookstore's walls—plastered with mimeographed flyers, loopy fan mail, smutty posters, and FBI surveillance files—truly capture the '60s at street (or perhaps more accurately, gutter) level.

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patrician drollery:
"Our topic tonight
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guess, acquire or
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Best in Show

Recommendations
by R.C. Baker

Jim Lambie: Spiritualized

Anton Kern Gallery
532 West 20th Street
212-367-9663, antonkerngallery.com
Through December 17

Dark Rainbows

In Jim Lambie's *Vortex (Sticky Fingers)* (2011), a large photo of Mick Jagger and Keith Richards harks back to the Rolling Stones' album, which featured Andy Warhol's iconic cover design of an actual zipper concealing a picture of a tighty-whitey-clad bulge. But the Glasgow-bom artist has here replaced the rockers' faces with conical voids cut directly into the wall. Constructed from concentric rings of fiberboard painted in Day-Glo colors and shiny black, each "vortex" is roughly a foot across and penetrates nearly 18 inches inward. The diminishing diameters, many in alternating hues, seem to warp as you walk by, giving Mick an even more labile megamouth than nature endowed. Elsewhere, Lambie embeds colorful zippers into white canvases, which contract or loosen to reveal bright spandex backing, imparting a sense of the constricted abandon inherent to arena-rock extravaganzas.

The huge squares of mirrored steel mounted on the wall in *Sun Orchid* are all bent at the corners, revealing more layers of rainbow-hued metal behind them. Although 24 feet across, these colorful dog-ears have an intimate appeal that conjures the pleasurable mysteries offered by a bargain bin of used record albums. The mirrors in turn reflect the 23-foot-long floor piece *Metal Urbain*, which includes segments of knight's armor flattened by cement blocks. Filled with ravishing subtleties, this monochrome expanse throbs like a subwoofer among the more highly pitched objects surrounding it. Arrayed nearby, dozens of jars crammed with colorful T-shirts jut from the walls like psychedelic fungus, their coiled density a physical metaphor for an exhibit where ideas spring out as suddenly as snakes from a novelty can of peanuts.

Ed Sanders: Fug You

The "Mimeograph Revolution" of the early 1960s was a grab bag of street-level publications that launched ripples of liberation within a generation suspicious of a pointless war and a capricious military draft. In his vivid memoir of the decade, *Fug You*, Ed Sanders describes distributing his own *Fuck You/A Magazine of the Arts* from "a secret location in the Lower East Side." His hand-cranked pages overflowed with poetry from Beat luminaries, Egyptian hieroglyphs customized with spurring penises and hypodermic needles, and satirical graphics for "The Lady Dickhead Advertising Company" (which garnered him an obscenity rap, eventually dismissed). A

Art

cheerful workaholic, Sanders exhorted readers to "practice practice practice" their chosen art forms while also, in those paranoid times, advising his compatriots to follow Lenny Bruce's dictum "deny deny deny."

The prose seesaws between Midwestern earnestness and pungent Beat-speak: "Freedom summer screamed in our minds." Sanders reproduces numerous photos, posters, magazine pages, bills, and other ephemera from his voluminous archive, and includes the text of a businesslike 1964 letter to President Johnson (co-written with Allen Ginsberg) volunteering a downtown get-out-the-vote effort while pointedly questioning the incumbent's increasingly savage Vietnam policy.

In 1964, Sanders opened The Peace Eye Bookstore in an Alphabet City. It served as equal parts art gallery, crash pad, and rehearsal space for the Dada-esque folk-rock troupe the Fugs, which Sanders formed with Tuli Kupferberg (who survived a leap from the Manhattan Bridge in 1945, a feat Ginsberg later immortalized in "Howl").

Although plans to use a Warhol Brillo box as a



Courtesy Anton Kern Gallery, New York

**Extra-glimmer
twins: Lambie's
*Vortex (Sticky
Fingers)*, 2011**

drum never materialized, songs such as "Kill for Peace," "Coca-Cola Douche," and the existential ditty "Nothing" remain invigoratingly fresh. At heart a patriot, Sanders writes that the Fugs believed there were "oodles of freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution that were not being used." Today's Occupy Wall Street movement can take, if not a lesson, at least inspiration (and perhaps solace) from Sanders's triumphs and travails, such as his lament that after a "thunderous" 1965 "Sing-In for Peace" at Carnegie Hall, "the war went on for another nine and a half years." Righteous protest, he implies, must outlive mere election cycles.

"The Sixties" live on, because, love or hate the era, it formed the cultural miasma we breathe today, whether *South Park* brilliance or numbing Internet porn, exhilarating artistic pluralism or bloviating blogs. Even those who loathed the counterculture understood its vast influence, including William F. Buckley, who opened a 1968 interview of Sanders with trademark patrician drollery: "Our topic tonight is the Hippies, the understanding of which we must, I guess, acquire or die painfully." (416 pp., \$26, *Da Capo*)