

"Outsiderism"

FLEISHER/OLLMAN GALLERY
1216 Arch Street, 5A
April 16–June 8

Alan Constable, *Untitled (White Concertina Camera)*,
2012, ceramic, 6 1/4 x 7 x 9 1/2".

"Outsiderism," organized by Alex Baker to coincide with a historical survey at the Philadelphia Museum of Art of self-taught artists, both complements and provides a contrast to the larger exhibition. "Great and Mighty Things" presents canonical figures such as James Castle, Martín Ramírez, and Purvis Young, among others, "each with a moving personal story, many from disadvantaged, rural backgrounds far removed from the mainstream art world," according to the museum's news release. "Outsiderism" rebuffs the loner perception by framing its nine artists as engaged practitioners addressing complex issues of identity, sexuality, politics, technology, popular culture, and imagemaking while working within the framework of commercial galleries and charity organizations.

Despite the shift from outsider to insider, the artists' distinctive biographies still inform their work. The prodigious output of Gregory Blackstock, a retired dishwasher who categorizes and draws related objects—such as the sixteen variations of fireworks in *2-Shot Repeater Aerial Bomb Color Perspectives*, 2008—derives in part from incredible memorization skills endowed by his autism. The painted and glazed ceramics of photographic devices—a white concertina camera, a green digital point-and-shoot, and a Canon blue 110—by the legally blind Alan Constable illuminate how visual art can be created, translated, and experienced through other senses. And David Jarvey copes with Down syndrome through a *Star Trek* fan fiction video, *The Forbidden Zone*, 2000, made in collaboration with Harrell Fletcher and others, in which Jarvey plays a *Starfleet* captain who, after becoming disfigured and paralyzed, returns to a planet whose inhabitants can restore him to perfect health through illusion.

Michael Patterson-Carver's drawings of demonstrations reflect on partisan American politics: *Pink-faced Tea Partiers* cheer the closure of a Planned Parenthood



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center in *Women's Rights in Kansas*, 2011, and women challenge Walmart in *Equal Pay for Equal Work*, 2011. Representations of women elsewhere are ambiguous, if not problematic, especially since only one artist in "Outsiderism," Lisa Reid, is female. How do Knicoma Frederick's lusty depictions relate to his stated pursuit of justice, equality, and truth? Do ceramics of full-figured women by Christopher Mason reference fertility goddess figurines or do they indulge a preference for BBWs? The curatorial selection raises interesting questions about liberties taken by artists, outsider or otherwise.

— Christopher Howard