

Robert Bergman

P.S.1 and Yossi Milo

Twenty-four of Robert Bergman's large-scale photographs, each an incandescent portrait of an everyday yet exceptional person, were arrayed near eye level along the walls of two P.S.1 galleries. The striking colors and sharp detail brought to mind Old Master renderings of prosperous sitters. But Bergman's subjects are often distinguished by missing teeth, disheveled hair, scruffy beards, and misshapen eyes—features suggesting poverty and suffering. All the images are untitled, enabling viewers to make direct contact with the characters.

Bergman himself lived and worked on the margins until recently. Now in his 60s, he is finally achieving recognition for his art.

While the photographs were all printed this year, they were shot between 1985 and 1997, in such cities as Cincinnati; Gary, Indiana; Youngstown, Ohio; and New York. Some faces are pensive, others tragic-looking, even pathetic. Most subjects seem to be gazing inward, even when looking straight at the camera. A

young man with a Mohawk resembles van Gogh; his ear is punctuated with a tiny sapphire stud that echoes the blue of his eyes. Another man, with facial sores that bloom against his weathered skin, has his eyes closed and mouth slightly open, as if he were listening to internal voices. And a woman in a Pucci-print turban with a key around her neck grimaces, revealing a gap in a row of lower teeth.

Many of the same images were on display at Yossi Milo, along with a rare double portrait and a couple of horizontally formatted works. Two dark-skinned teenagers with similar almond-shaped eyes—he wearing a jacket with a fake-fur collar, she a pink skirt and a white fake-fur jacket—cling to each other as if trying to merge. And a skeptical African American child in a white hooded sweatshirt pokes out his right lower lip.

—*Elisabeth Kley*

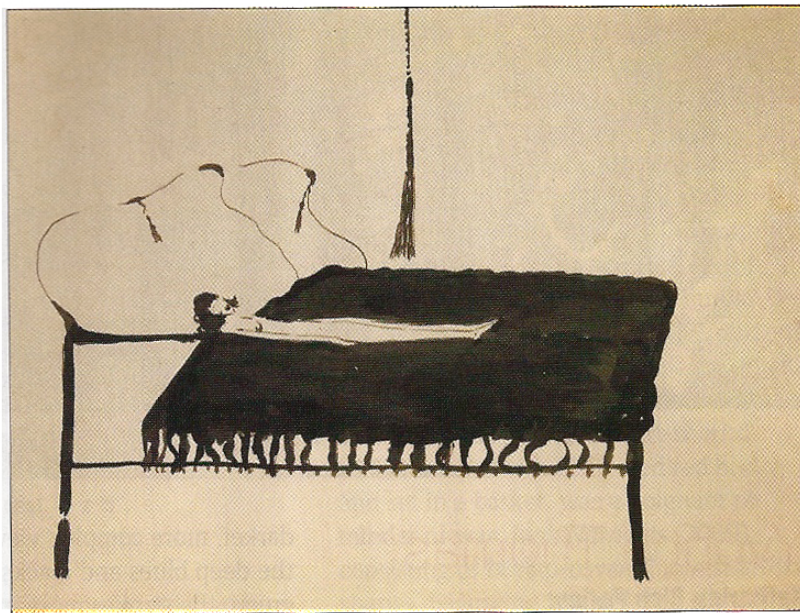
Clara Tice

Meredith Ward Fine Art

Those were the days—judging from this show of Clara Tice's drawings and posters—when being an artist in New York was one long frolic. Just a tot when her family moved to the city from Elmira, New York, Tice (1888–1973) would grow up to study with Robert Henri, exhibit with the Independents, and become, in 1915, bohemia's It Girl—the public-morals zealot Anthony Comstock was shocked, shocked, by some of her

sketchy nudes in a Greenwich Village restaurant. The press took note, in large type.

This show of scrap-size works in pen



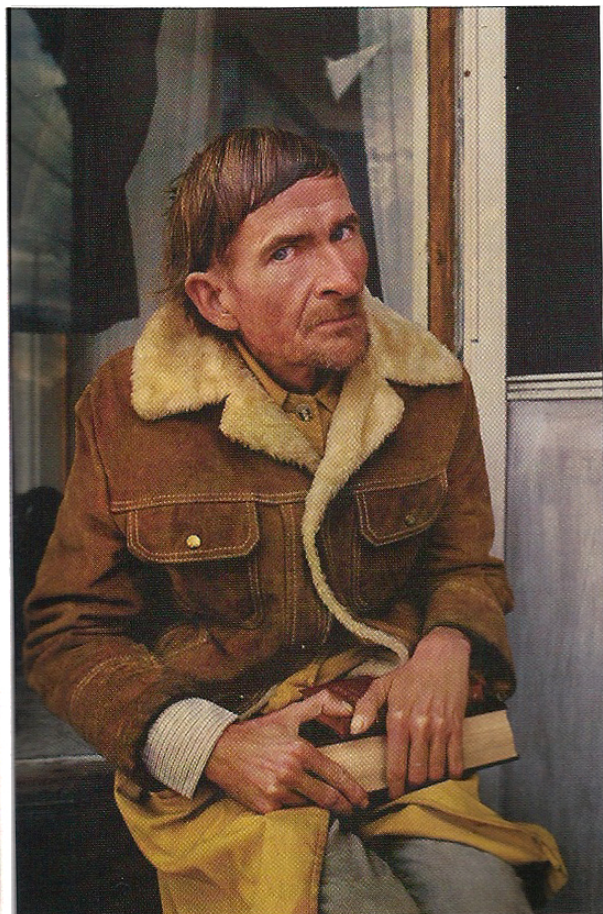
Clara Tice, *Luxurious Bed*, ca. 1915, ink on paper, 8½" x 11".

Meredith Ward Fine Art.

and ink demonstrated Tice's mastery of the continuous twisting and twirling line. The artist also drew magazine illustrations and created elegantly exuberant notices for art-world balls and fundraisers. Her work could be merely suggestive of its subject—as in *Graceful Dancer Reaching Up* (n.d.), which is close to abstraction—or specific. Her skinny sinuosity paid respect to Aubrey Beardsley and then, in *Three Leaping Dancers* (ca. 1915), anticipated Jules Feiffer's airborne sprites.

Tice's skittering figurations also record the social circle she shared with people like the Stettheimers, and which also intersected with Marcel Duchamp's New York. Images like *Cocktail Shaker* (n.d.), *Luxurious Bed* (ca. 1915), and *Two Clowns* (n.d.), with its androgynous subjects, are recognizably Dada in their winking awareness of transgression and hurt. The long-haired woman in *The War Mother* (1916) is a Rapunzel letting down her locks in mourning or fear. Tice was a feminist—she bobbed her hair early on—and her works featuring women often convey captivity shattered, liberation insisted on, with dark areas stained an angry black by her pen. Like so many women artists of her time and temperament, she fell into obscurity. It's a pleasure to make her acquaintance.

—*Celia McGee*



Robert Bergman, *Untitled*, 2009, C-print, 37" x 25".

P.S.1.