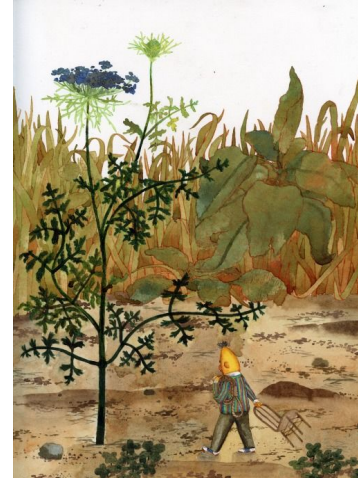


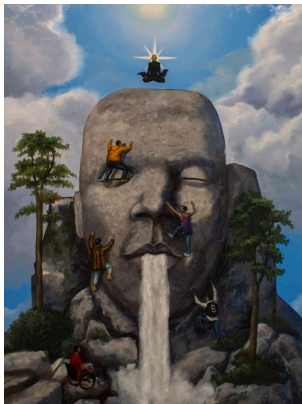
# Lords of Distaste: Team Macho “New Work New Jerseys” at Gitler & \_\_\_\_\_

Brandon Johnson

Prior to walking into the gallery you see vinyl lettering on the storefront window reading Gitler & \_\_\_\_\_, the blank being filled in this month with TEAM MACHO except backwards - a mistake gone right. What is Team Macho? Team Macho is a Toronto-based artist collective comprised of Nicholas Aoki, Stephen Appleby-Barr, Christopher Buchan, and Lauchie Reid. Why such a distasteful name? “It’s the worst name we could think of,” answers Mr. Reid. Strange tactic, but it seems to be working out for them. Their latest show “New Work New Jerseys” at Harlem’s Gitler & \_\_\_\_\_, operated by New York art world impresario Avi Gitler, includes a large selection of work on the smaller side - intermittently dark, irreverent, and absurd. This is an exhibition that children would be drawn to from afar, but who would then be quickly drawn away by concerned guardians once the details of the content come into focus - a miniature Bert from Sesame Street carrying a noose and chair, an Old Master style still-life with the nude lower half of a man reflecting in a background mirror, a terrifying lettuce-faced person sourced from the bowels of the Internet. Team Macho is pushing the boundaries of taste through the seduction of skillful rendering. Abjection in art in nothing new, with an established lineage including Cindy Sherman, Paul McCarthy, Louise Bourgeois, Helen Chadwick, Gilbert & George, Carolee Schneemann, Kiki Smith, Sarah Lucas, Jake and Dinos Chapman, among others. But Team Macho’s transgressions are more tongue-in-cheek, more millennial, more ... Canadian?



*I Miss You, Ernie*, 14 x 10 in,  
watercolor and ink on paper



With that said, it’s not all social subversion. One painting, *A Drake’s Progress*, includes a multiplicity of Drakes climbing a rocky outcropping shaped in Drake’s visage, illustrating the rapper’s rise to fame with lowly wheelchair Degrassi Drake ascending to cross-legged and floating Obama-esque Bodhi Drake. This painting in particular was declared by a longtime neighborhood resident to be his favorite - an expression of Drake’s own line “started from the bottom now we here.” This man even took the time to explain the Drake phenomenon to an out-of-the-pop-music-loop middle-aged woman attending the exhibition, reflecting the ever shifting demographics of New York and Harlem more specifically. Somehow a Team Macho painting is the ring that rules them all, displayed in a space whose basement was formerly better known in the

neighborhood as the “Blowjob Palace” after the types of nefarious activities that occurred there. Seems that Gitler & Team Macho are doing something right. Go figure.

[lords-of-distaste-team-macho-new-work-new](http://lords-of-distaste-team-macho-new-work-new)