

# THE GALLERY OF EVERYTHING



FEBRUARY 2ND TO MARCH 16TH

## cocky

FROM THE DIVINE TO THE EROTIC

**COCKY:** is a survey of aroused physical manhood. From the phallic deities of **Chico Tabibuia**, to the abstracted hardcore of **Paulus de Groot**, the exhibition is a visual investigation into a male taboo.

Drawing on Afro-Brazilian Umbanda and ancient Yoruba beliefs, the carved effigies of Brazilian sculptor **Chico Tabibuia** (1936 - 2007) are flush with faith. We see *Exus*: angelic messengers, commuting between humanity and the gods, intended both to astonish and to dominate. Their effect is immediate and compelling, just as the self-taught **Tabibuia** was himself compelled to make them. Yet their rationale is elusive: divinely inspired, coded, unspoken.

Christened Francisco Morales da Silva, **Chico Tabibuia** was born into a complex ancestry of enslaved labourers and Portuguese slave-owners. His name, like his work, grew from the mighty trumpet tree (or tabibuia), native of South America, and used for many of his early carvings. Championed in his lifetime (and to some extent exoticised) by artist/educator Paulo Pardal, **Tabibuia** was always more than a folk artist. His work represented a bridge between the then and the now, his raw totemic figures speaking of a sacred sexuality, and reaching back in time.

Born into a family of artists, the Dutch painter **Paulus de Groot** (b 1977) portrays unedited fears and desires within his remarkable and explicit tableaux. Graphic scenes of macho foreplay and frame-grabs from cherished horror movies satiate the artist's aesthetic needs. Yet it was not always so, **De Groot's** hopes for a creative outlet were realised only with the nurture of Atelier Heerenplaats, a leading studio in Rotterdam for artists with disabilities. Through them, the artist's inner life emerged; and with it, an autobiographical fantasy of graphic ambition.

**De Groot's** paintings are an acknowledgement of his sexual urges, and a provocation for all who dare view them. It is an unexpurgated dream diary, where figures, outlines, positions, intentions, blur into a mass of body parts and fluids; and the paint seems almost to step off the canvas.

Much discussed and considered the peak pinnacle of American outsiderism, the rarely-seen and highly sexualised **Woodbridge Figures** (c 1920/40) are a diminutive community of armless caricatures, whose maker(s) and purpose(s) remain strange and unknown. Equally unknowable, and perhaps less unsettling, the dreamy pastels and watercolours of **Dean Henry** (c 1950 - 2010), whose illustrations of a private love-life posthumously enchanted a growing circle of devotees.

To contrast with these, the curators have selected: a hermaphroditic diorama by **Peter Hand** (1928 – 2024), a trained British artist and model maker, with a curious hobby of mythic exploration; a pair of satirical commentaries by artist/activist **Michael Patterson-Carver** (b 1958); an erotic sketch by the notorious German artist **George Grosz** (1893 – 1959); and an anonymous cartoonish scroll (c 1970/80), depicting the blatant eroticism of the lascivious Indian gods.

The Gallery of **Everything** invites all to see **COCKY** in the spirit in which it is intended: an elegant discussion of the heavenly, and of the very human.

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**Chico Tabibuia**, 1936 - 2007 (Brazil)

**Chico Tabibuia** was born Francisco Morales da Silva, a self-taught Brazilian woodworker and carver, descended from a lineage of slaves and owners. Working with wood from the trumpet tree (or *tabibuia*), the artist drew on ancient beliefs for his phallic representations of indigenous deities known as *Exus*. Upon their discovery, **Tabibuia's** time-travelling effigies won him considerable acclaim; and he found himself celebrated in multiple exhibitions, biennales and publications (notable collections include Museu Afro Brasil and Museu de Arte de São Paulo). **COCKY** is the first major retrospective of **Tabibuia's** work in Europe.

**Paulus de Groot**, b 1977 (Netherlands)

Born into a family of Dutch artists, **Paulus De Groot** began his practice formally at the age of 16 upon the death of his father. **De Groot** developed a highly distinctive style of thickly applied paint, often on an unusually large scale. **De Groot's** recurring fascinations with his own fears and desires have led him to depict horror films and, as in this exhibition, homo-erotic hardcore: whereby limbs and body parts are reduced and intertwined to the point of near-abstraction. **De Groot** still lives and works in Holland.

**Dean Henry**, c 1950-2010 (United States)

An erotic trove of intimate drawings were discovered at the turn of the 21st century by the granddaughter of a retired artist in the northern United States. Little is known apart from a name, **Dean Henry**, and several hundred delicate watercolours: portraits perhaps of the author and his lovers, male and female, together, alone, each within a defined ecstatic state. The watercolours are exhibited here for the first time in any commercial gallery.

**Anonymous (Woodbridge Figures)**, c 1920/40 (United States)

Discovered by construction workers in the clay pits of Woodbridge, New Jersey, this collection of carved armless figurines is of unknown origin and purpose; yet the rosy cheeks and overt sexuality have defined them as an iconic collectable of early American art *brut*. The figures may have been used as part of a game or ritual by a local community. In addition to prominent genitals, several have plugs in their head with runic and/or sexualised markings. The pieces featured in **COCKY** are unique and offered for sale in groups of four.

**Michael Patterson-Carver**, b 1958 (United States)

A lifetime campaigner and rights activist, **Michael Patterson-Carver** displayed his drawings as part of a personal protest in his hometown of Portland, Oregon. When the work came to the attention of artist Harrel Fletcher, it was included in the People's Biennale in 2009 and led **Patterson-Carver** to exhibit across America and Europe. **Patterson-Carver** here satirises the art world's capriciousness by placing his own artworks in the garbage can outside a gallery which prefers to represent paintings of enormous sex organs.

**George Grosz**, 1893 - 1959 (Germany)

Considered one of the great talents of his era, the infamous satirical painter **George Grosz** fled Hitler's Germany for the United States in 1933. Primarily celebrated for detailed drawings of German society, he is less known for his erotic oeuvre, which he returned to throughout his career. Preferred subjects include threesomes, orgies, and scenes of extreme taboo, featuring men, women and hermaphrodites. This sketch shows the artist himself, engaging in banter with two female friends, neither of whom notices his physical excitement at their encounter.

**Peter Hand**, 1928 - 2024 (United Kingdom)

Although formally trained, sculptor, professor and poet **Peter Hand** was never quite able to position himself within the context of the wider art world. His off-kilter Jungian dioramas, made to reflect a private and personal dynamic, were painstakingly fabricated alongside public animal sculptures intended primarily for children to explore. **Hand's** interest in the figure of the hermaphrodite was profound, mythical and strange. His written texts tend to present more questions than they answer. This work, *Hermaphrodite Being*, was formerly in the collection of the Museum Erotica, Copenhagen.