

# Art in Review; Elisabeth Kley -- Momena Art

By ROBERTA SMITH

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A fascination with drag queens and, it would seem, their relationship to the exotic and to non-Western decorative traditions fuels Elisabeth Kley's ink drawings and sly ceramic vessels. Continuity is provided by the peacock; after all, the male of the species is naturally in drag, and his extravagant, wide-eyed tail feathers have inspired countless decorative motifs, especially in Middle Eastern cultures. Many of Ms. Kley's ink drawings deconstruct the peacock, giving its open tail the rigidity of a wrought-iron grill or elaborating it into a nearly abstract eyes-only pattern.

Other drawings are extravagant renderings of extravagant characters, including the filmmaker Jack Smith in a turban, and the Warhol denizen Candy Darling. Nearly life-size, these images are executed with flair, but Ms. Kley is not above redoing the features that don't satisfy her with additional bits of collage, which enhances the sense of made-up artifice while increasing the works' physical robustness.

But the most impressive works remain Ms. Kley's updates on majolica, vases of a vaguely 1950s vintage whose decoration almost always includes pairs of knowing, secretive eyes that stare back at the viewer, reversing the gaze -- whether it is Western or straight.

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