

'The Visible Vagina' at Francis M. Naumann and David Nolan; Ryan Wallace's 'Glean'; 'Hotwire Comics #3'

Judy Chicago's artful *Red Flag*—the infamous photograph of her hand removing a saturated tampon—remains as fierce a declaration of feminist identity as it was in 1971, when some viewers mistook the bloody object for a severed penis. Though the work may only hint at the fanged monster of men's neuroses, its strident tone here is the exception. In this lively, upfront, double-gallery celebration of a woman's biological essence, the sculpted, painted, and photographed vaginas that crowd the spaces—nearly a century's worth, from Picasso to Carolee Schneemann—are kinder and gentler, typically offering their provocations (if any) with wry, sexual humor.

Allyson Mitchell has removed the toothy threat altogether from her room-size installation, *Hungry Purse: The Vagina Dentata in Late Capitalism*. Slip through its doorway of giant labia crocheted in pink and find yourself inside a soft, colorful sex pad full of pillows and, among other items, several pink buck-toothed beavers. More cynically, Jane Hammond skewers stereotypical ideals of family by inserting, thanks to Photoshop, porno cootch into sedate vintage photographs. And Chema Madoz, true to his elegant whimsy, perfectly captures the symbolic triangle of the mons pubis with a martini glass of dark liquid placed before a woman in white.

Numerous works exalt the contours of the cleft, some with references to Courbet's frank 1866 depiction in *L'Origine du monde*. The best of them tend toward abstraction, like Katia Santibanez's minimalist painting *Universal Pleasure*, a bifurcated, heart-shaped patch of dark brushstrokes, and the intricately whorled *Pussy*, an impressionistic image made entirely from glued thread by



Courtesy David Nolan Gallery
Emmett Kelly blushes: David Humphrey's *Clown Girl*, 2006, at "The Visible Vagina"

Details

The Visible Vagina

Francis M. Naumann Fine Art
24 West 57th Street, 212-582-3201
Through March 20

David Nolan Gallery
527 West 29th Street, 212-925-6190
Through March 20

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The most striking piece might be Nancy Grossman's *Bride* (1966), a zoomed-in view, constructed from layered leather, of a clothed woman's middle—clothed except for the center, where a shiny vulva has burst through laces intended to close a now gaping slit, implying, it would seem, an awakening from sexual repression. After viewing almost a hundred vaginas, you may get the same feeling.

Ryan Wallace: 'Glean'

If the scientists at CERN want to ease the crackpot fears of their [Large Hadron Collider](#) destroying the universe, they should hire Ryan Wallace to design the group's promotional material. Inspired by the search for the Higgs Boson—the so-called God particle—Wallace based the show's works of paint and collaged material on graphs of high-energy collisions. But in *Quest (Higgs Boson) 1*, *Glean 1*, and the series *A Brief History of Demise*, the jittery progressions of vertically parallel lines—strips of paper and cellophane painted shades of blue and white—seem less representative of hard-core quantum mechanics than they do of simple bliss. Shredding the canvas here and there, Wallace even goes a little manic. The exquisite textures, sometimes sprinkled with opalescent powder or blurred with an overlaid sheet of Mylar, may remind some of [Mark Tobey's](#) mysticism. This is decidedly physics for poets—and painters. *Morgan Lehman Gallery, 317 Tenth Ave, 212-268-6699. Through March 20*

'Hotwire Comics #3'

Culled from the latest Fantagraphics anthology of comics, edited by [Glenn Head](#), this engaging survey runs the gamut of style and story. [Mary Fleener](#) brings her Picasso-like fragmentation, which she dubs "cubismo," to a party scene. Head himself parades characters who owe their ugliness to *Mad's* [Basil Wolverton](#), while R. Sikoryak—whose parodies have graced covers of *The New Yorker*—demonstrates his masterful mimicry by placing Batman and other classic characters in a comics store. [Tim Lane](#), another terrific draftsman, pays homage to pulp fiction's deeply shadowed drama, and painter Mark Dean Veca, who often plays with textile patterns, here morphs the characters of *Popeye* into hideous orange figures, their limbs (as if diseased) densely covered by nodules, bulges, and folds. Even if most of the show is black-and-white, the collection confirms

that some of today's most vigorous art comes from the hands of cartoonists. *Scott Eder Gallery, 18 Bridge St, Brooklyn, 718-797-1100. Through March 31*