



G. Roger Denson

Cultural critic and essayist published with
Parkett and Art in America

When Walls Come Falling Down: Left Political Art Timeline, 1989 – 2000

Posted April 16, 2012 | 3:32 PM



Patricia Cronin's exquisite compositions of lesbian sexuality are arguably one of the most enduring introductions made by Bill Arning's Stonewall 25: Imaginings of the Gay Past, Celebrating the Gay Present.

Stonewall 25: Imaginings of the Gay Past, Celebrating the Gay Present, organized by Bill Arning at White Columns has been called by many who had seen it the best queer group show ever shown in New York. Situated just a few blocks from the original Stonewall Inn, the White columns space was amply filled with a grouping of work that shouldn't have worked, given the seemingly arbitrary selection and spatial arrangements and relationships, yet it did work precisely because of the idiosyncrasies of seeing historic queer celebrity and literary photos and porn alongside objects fussily concerned with their own artful presentation. As for those historical items, Arning pointedly uses them to bring attention to the successive generations of American queers by marking out what we share, what we don't, and what part of the collective past filters down to form our tastes and proclivities. Arning himself wrote about the generational pairings, that the new generation of queers "look back on the Stonewall and pre-Stonewall eras with romantic nostalgia...This, generation while still active in ACT-UP, Queer Nation, and WAC, still feels a sense of sorrow at not knowing what it was like to be there that night at the first moments of revolution when the legendary (possibly apocryphal) fed-up drag queen threw the first bottle at a cop.