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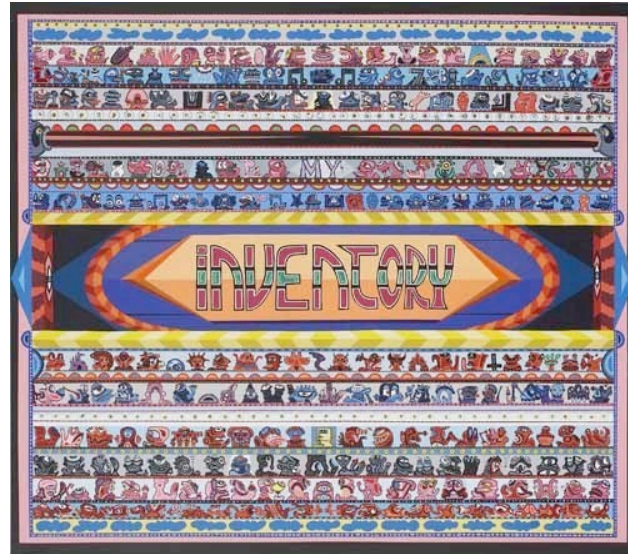
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ARTFORUM

Critic's Pick:

**Erik Parker at Modern Art
Museum of Fort Worth
by Benjamin Lima
Dec 5- Feb 6, 2011**

This compact selection of works showcases Erik Parker's adept combination of trippy biomorphic figuration and aggressive neon palette, to jolting effect. The canvases and works on paper can be sorted in terms of their (distant) family resemblance to traditional genres, such as portrait



and still life. Several of the paintings depict a single head above an ambiguous slogan (as in *New Freedom* and *Sink or Swim*, both 2008). Here, one's sense of the head's structure, its basic shape and form, is undermined by the full frontal assault of intense color and wildly gyrating decorative elements. A certain ambiguity remains captivating: Are these creatures disintegrating or coalescing? Are they in pleasure or pain? Especially arresting is *Half Made Man*, 2010, which shows a gooey-looking mess of viscera completely pulled apart from any recognizable skeletal structure; this work enacts an ecstatic triumph of figurative invention over the constraints of realistic modeling.

In a less manic mode, however, the most engrossing works use the format of friezes, comprising row upon row of small-scale figures. In these, the enforced discipline of the grid's repetition does something to tame the artist's wild inventions and open them up for reflective analysis. In the aptly titled *My Inventory*, 2010, horizontal rows of bite-size mutants, cyborgs, and freaks bracket the central marquee, as they seem to line up for an inspection or a performance. More generally, it is Parker's ability to channel seemingly bottomless reserves of pictorial energy into sharply designed compositions that accounts for his work's ongoing appeal.