

JAMES COHAN GALLERY

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'FOLKERT DE JONG: LES SALTIMBANQUES' Folkert de Jong is a young Dutch sculptor, though looking at his debut New York solo show at the James Cohan Gallery in Chelsea you would swear he was from Los Angeles. He makes life-size sculptural tableaux that bring to mind the grotesque masked figures inhabiting the Los Angeles stalwart Paul McCarthy's video performances, not to mention his use of icky, viscous industrial insulation materials like Styrofoam and polyurethane. Then there is the palette — sky blue, bubble-gum pink, burning reds and a toxic green — making the figures look like elaborately costumed visitors at a Halloween party, or melted department-store mannequins.

His aesthetic roots also reach back into Modern European art, specifically Picasso's paintings of the Harlequin, an archetypal itinerant circus performer and lonely adventurer. For the youthful Picasso the Harlequin was a kind of *alter ego*, reflecting the alienation of an aspiring artist and foreigner living alone in Paris. Mr. de Jong's interest in the Harlequin feels more complicated than this, with him arranging groups of Harlequin figures in acrobatic formations (above, "The Tower Violin Player") or huddled about a fire in an oil drum. They are real people, if a little coldblooded. And they are also metaphors of a sort, pointing up the condition of the contemporary artist: a beggared fool performing for the wealthy. (Through Nov. 24, James Cohan Gallery, 533 West 26th Street, Chelsea, 212-714 9500, jamescohan.com.) BENJAMIN GENOCCHIO