

Review

## Ida Applebroog

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**"Photogenetics," *Rowland Contemporary*, through Oct 27.**

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At the age of (nearly) 80, Ida Applebroog, a pioneer in alternative media and feminist art circles in the late 1970s, continues to broaden the potential of feminist art by entwining her own practice within the thorny politics of representation. Her most laudable achievement is that she does so with interesting results.

The thrust of this exhibition comprises eight portraits of hauntingly distorted human heads made in 2007. Pushing and pulling thin scrimms of ink and paint over the surface of digital prints, Applebroog gives a ghastly presence to phantom characters such as *Vera Mae*, a dark, freakish monster with flowing hair and hollow eyes and mouth; *Brian*, who peers pitifully out from behind a clay facade; and the strangely endearing, bespectacled *Caleb*.



Ida Applebroog, *Caleb*, 2007.

Applebroog also presents two sets of photographic ink-jet prints—*Good Women* (2004) and *Good Men* (2006)—depicting small gestural female and male figures she wrought herself in clay. Though these fetish-like sculptures barely hold their humanoid forms, crude penises or vulvas leave traces of gender on their rough-hewn bodies.

These portraits are complemented by the *Galileo Works* from 1977, a set of small, zinelike books arranged on a shelf so that viewers can thumb through the pages.

Decades separate Applebroog's earlier graphic narrative style and repetitious experiments from the complexity of her current mixed-media process, but this exhibition demonstrates that she is still at the top of her practice.

— Michelle Grabner