



Amandine Urruty, *The Book*, 2015, graphite on paper, 24" x 36." Courtesy of CASS.

## CORROSIVELY BRIGHT

Contemporary Art Space & Studio – Tampa

### An Exhibition of Earthly Delights

By Jon Seals

Amandine Urruty's work has been described as offering a "cheerful gallery of deviant portraits, associating grotesque outfits with baroque decorum which miraculously reconcile lovers of alchemistic symbolism to young ladies with too much makeup."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Urruty's graphite compositions are packed with as many eccentric characters and wickedly playful scenarios as were exhibited in the "Corrosively Bright" show at Contemporary Art Space & Studio (CASS) in Tampa, Florida. Twelve artists<sup>2</sup> contributed work to the exhibition, flooding the gallery space with as much intensity and variety as those overfilling in attendance on opening night. Guests were ushered in by a live DJ perched atop a white half-wall room divider spinning music, playing the part of the Pied Piper late into the night and most noticeably providing the sonic pairing to the live-illustration battle for the local installment of *Secret Walls*, with Greg Mike, Denial, Bask and Frank Forte. Ten years ago, Terry Guy, inspired by Marvel comics and graffiti, created the *Secret Walls* art event, something he describes as the "Fight Club" of the art scene. First held in an East London bar, *Secret Walls* has since traveled the world hosted by various art venues throughout 25 countries.<sup>3</sup>

So this is what it might feel like to be on the wrong side of a Hieronymus Bosch landscape. Fashionistas and gallery goers' plates

were overfilled with luxurious portions of food and their cups were spilling libations. They were entertained with sets of live dueling artists, transfixed by the beats of the MC and surrounded by the slick acrylic paintings of Ben Frost created on McDonald's french fry containers, with the renderings of sharks spray painted directly onto the gallery walls by artist Shark Toof. The lines blurred between reality and magical realism, and it was difficult to define the edges of performance, art and actuality. I was dizzy from the sensory overload until the quietly disturbing whispers of Urruty's work invited my attention like the aroma of a match blown out. Her drawings were not an escape into another world, nor embellishments of reality. They did not entertain, but rather functioned as a fun-house mirror reflecting the Dionysian pop-culture celebrations I found myself in the midst of. I found refuge in her subtle and careful graphite marks exquisitely polished to perfection in each work that were void of color, like ghosts among the living. My own reflection, as well as the exhibition, was brought to order through her peculiar mirror filled with a "cheerful gallery of deviant portraits." ■

#### NOTES

1. [www.amandineurruty.com/biography/](http://www.amandineurruty.com/biography/)

2. Participating artists include Amandine Urruty, Andrea Wan, Bask, Ben Frost, Chris Buzzelli, Denial, Frank Forte, Greg Mike, Indie 184, Rich Simmons, Shark Toof, and Yoskay Yamamoto.

3. [www.theseecretwalls.com](http://www.theseecretwalls.com).

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