

Flash Art

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ART FRAGMENTS FROM THE BIG APPLE

Greene Naftali

Paul Chan

In his first solo show, Paul Chan presents a firmer footing in the real than his earlier work, an expansion upon Henry Darger's chronicles. In *My birds... trash... the future*, among the digitally animated birds and groupings of naked figures, there emerge suicide bombers and a predatory trio from a Hummer. The hostile landscape around the axial tree borrowed from Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* suggests a moral desert. The Godot 'front' includes Goya's figures hanging from the tree. The back of the double-sided screen shows orgies and cannibalism — acts that in

the Book of Revelation solicit the end of the world. Much of the gratification from *My Birds...* comes from making such trans-historical ties. In addition to hip-hop cell phone rings, on the 'Godot side,' Vladimir and Estragon's boots have evolved into urban territorial gang markings (sneakers in trees); even the rapper Biggie Smalls is humiliated, stripped of his puffy coat. Revelation and Godot share relations of identity and contrariety here. Despite its turbulent context, Revelation offered the promise of grace and a time when justice would be served. In



PAUL CHAN, *My birds... trash... the future* (detail), 2004. Two-channel digital projection installation.

Beckett's existential allegory, however, hope is endlessly deferred. As with the world's most studied modern play, the

full experience of *My Birds...* can only come from taking in its two sides.

—Akiko Ichikawa