

ARTNEWS

**Gothic Revival**

by David Galloway

The opening of Marilyn Manson's recent show at Galerie Brigitte Schenk in Cologne occasioned a rare convergence of the arts world's regimental black with the sable accessories of gothic punk. Eye shadow was a useful aid in classifying the cheek-by-jowl crowd that came to see the 39 large-format watercolors painted by the Prince of Darkness.

Not surprisingly, the works gathered here under the title „Les Fluers du Mal“ drew less attention than the shock rocker himself. Sipping his personally trademarked brand of absinthe, the artist repeatedly voiced the hope that his works would be viewed on their own terms- he began to paint, after all, before he began to make music.

These watercolors are part of Manson's gesamtkunstwerk of remarkable, if sometimes disturbing, creative power. Inspired by those incarnations of the American nightmare, Marilyn Monroe and Charles Manson. An Ohio boy named Brian Hugh Warner has created a controversial antipop persona and is no stranger to the art circuit. He opened a private studio-gallery in Los Angeles last year; this spring he had a show at Space 39 in Fort Myers, Florida. Schenk showed some of his work at Scope Basel. Works in this show were priced between €28,000 (\$37,600) and €78,000 (\$104,800).

Manson's subjects are consistent with his bizarre and morbid image: disease, mutilation, addiction, homicide- even the death of his friend Christopher Reeve. Unsolved murders exert a peculiar fascination, particularly that of the 1940's starlet Elizabeth Short, known as the Black Dahlia. He explored such "flowers of evil" in the form of portraits rendered in a gestural, distorted style. In the show's title picture, the contours of two lush red poppies double as grinning skulls. A delicate nude portrait of a young girl is strongly reminiscent of the work of Otto Mueller; other paintings directly recall Manson's hero, Egon Schiele, and his sadomasochistic eroticism, as seen in a full-length study of Adolf Hitler as a transsexual. Like several other pieces, the 1999 *Die deutsche Kämpferin* (The German Fighter, Gemal) quickly found a buyer