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Breaking Ranks: Jen Ray's Rock Apocalypse at Albertz Benda



This fall marks the opening of Albertz Benda, a new contemporary gallery from Thorsten Albertz and Marc Benda on 26th Street in Chelsea. Though the pair are starting their inaugural season with shows from [Bill Beckley](#) and [Agathe Snow](#), opening on September 10 and 12 respectively, we're particularly keen on their subsequent booking: [Jen Ray](#)'s "Deep Cuts," opening on October 8, and marking the American-born artist's return from her time in Berlin. In a video preview for the exhibition (see below), Ray explains the foundations of her aesthetic — which looks, essentially, like *Jem and the Holograms* meets *Mad Max*, with a twist of Bowie's glam *Diamond Dogs* dystopia, played out in the sprawling style of Bosch's "Garden of Earthly Delights."

"At first it looks as if it's perfect, like I tried to create something perfect, but it's actually the opposite," Ray says of her smooth illustration style — reminiscent of *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints, despite her apocalyptic, militarized subject matter. "I built something up, and now I'm tearing it down."

Ray also notes her penchant for making art about women: "I think a lot of times women wear masks in our society, so that they fit in with what people think women are all about," Ray says. In the works, these masks are sometimes literal, from mouth-protective bandanas to full-on Daft Punk-style glittery motorcycle suits. But as she points out, more often, this masking is behavioral: "To me, it's almost a form of bravery to commit negative acts, for women, because it's so

Cooper, Anneliese. "Breaking Ranks: Jen Ray's Rock Apocalypse at Albertz Benda," *ARTINFO*. September 1, 2015.

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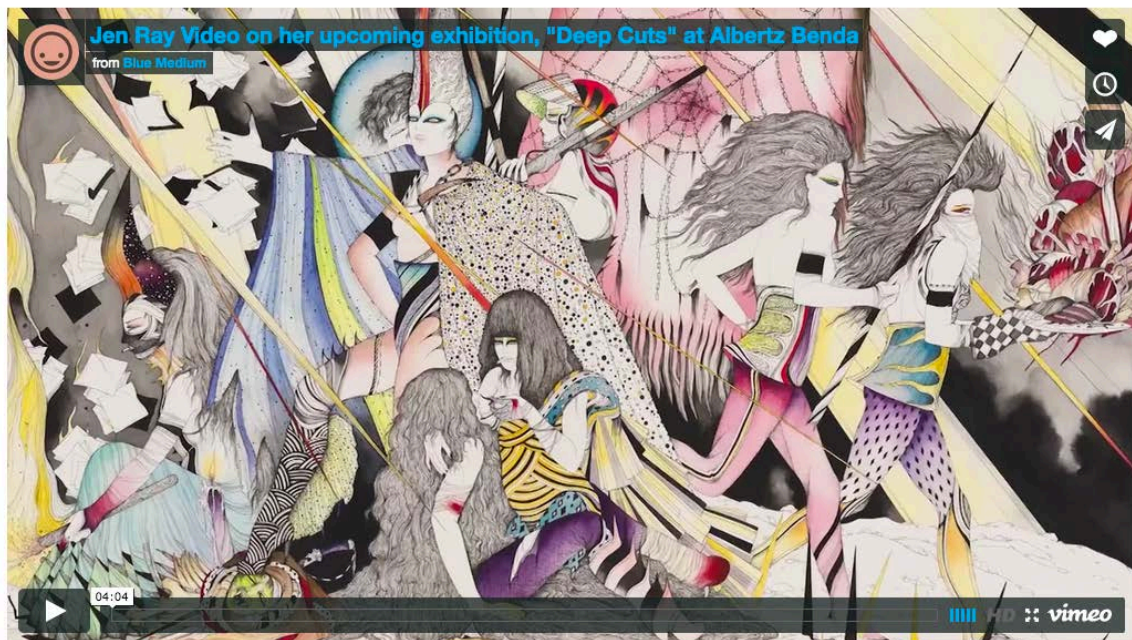
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unexpected,” citing the “transgressive behavior” that often comes out in venues like rock shows — hence the violent double entendre of her show’s title. Though she may depict armies, Ray’s professed interest lies in “breaking ranks” (“I just love that,” she adds, “people scattering”).

And it’s not just figurative. On October 8 at 6 pm, Ray will lead a procession (a release also employs the term “parade”) of women from the High Line to the gallery at 515 W 26th Street — among them, musician Honeychild Coleman, whose past performance credits include bombastic female acts like Peaches and The Slits, to lead the group in song. If it’s anything like the performance depicted in the video, there may well be some mohawks, perhaps even some toplessness, and certainly a surplus of flagrant, basement-show energy.

“When you have people coming together for a common cause, it’s very transformative,” Ray adds. “You start taking on these roles. You start stepping outside of yourself and becoming, in a way, a different person — a stronger person.”

While readying yourself to take part in the action, take a look at the full video, below.



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