

The Boston Globe

ART REVIEW

At Steven Zevitas Gallery, candy-colored visions of society's id

By Cate McQuaid Globe Correspondent, Updated February 21, 2020, 27 minutes ago



A detail from Anastasiya Tarasenko's "You Can't Teach Old Dogs New Tricks," created in 2019. ANASTASIYA TARASENKO

Populate the teeming moral fables of Hieronymus Bosch with the pugnacious figures of R. Crumb, sprinkle in feminism, and you may have the paintings of Anastasiya Tarasenko. Her works are up at Steven Zevitas Gallery.

Tarasenko, born in Ukraine in 1989, raised and based in New York, renders characters in candy-like squibs of paint on copper plates. The effect is vital — bright and squirmy, nearly fleshy in places. But she is young, and her content not yet cooked.

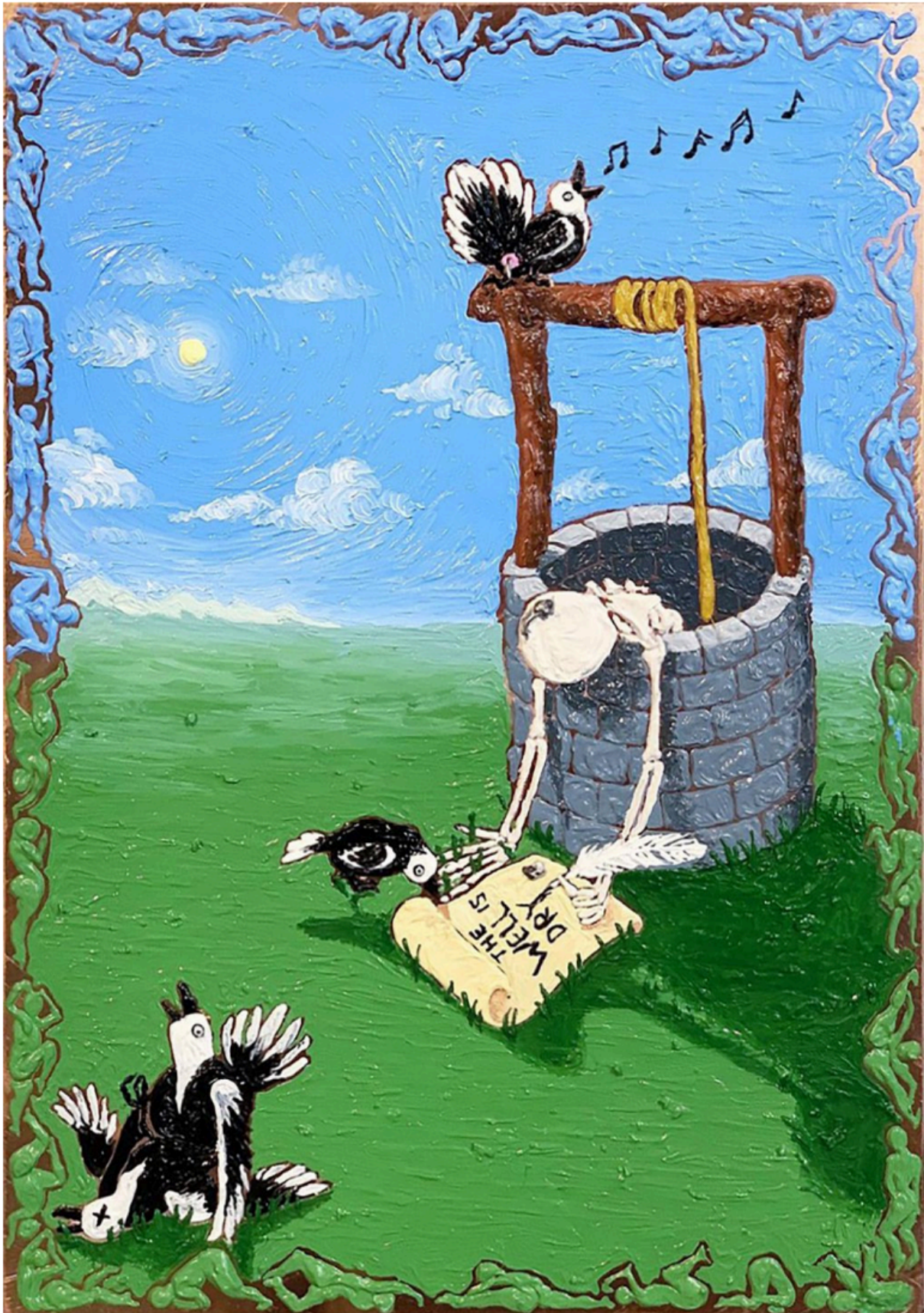
"You Can't Teach Old Dogs New Tricks" is Tarasenko's most ambitious piece, and her most Boschian. A god-like skeleton wrings raindrops from clouds. She breaks the painting into daytime on the left and nighttime on the right. Cordlike arms circle the composition and pluck up the landscape below like a carpet, revealing gold hieroglyphs.



Anastasiya Tarasenko's "You Can't Teach Old Dogs New Tricks." ANASTASIYA TARASENKO

The painting is a smorgasbord of an older generation's transgressions. An old woman in her underwear decapitates an ass and lifts her sword triumphantly. Jackal-headed demons enslave and molest people. Travelers debark from a sailing vessel and check into an elderly daycare where, under the gaze of giant stone busts, they engage in sexual and violent acts. It's at once madcap and disturbing. Tarasenko uses painstaking technique to unveil society's id, or perhaps her own.

Smaller, simpler paintings read like parables. In "The Well Is Dry," a skeleton droops over the rim of a well. Tarasenko fringes these paintings with tiny figures; the images seem a product of their conjuring.



Anastasiya Tarasenko's "The Well Is Dry." ANASTASIYA TARASENKO

Some works wrestle with moral rectitude. Others, such as “Gazed to Death,” in which a nude is pinned to a tree trunk by knifelike eyeballs, bemoan stale but sturdy power structures. In “Self-Portrait of the Artist, by the Artist, to the Artist,” she opens a slit in her throat as she gazes implacably at us. In text, she seems to mine her neuroses: “... I’m not sure I have what you want. You will never be satisfied ...”

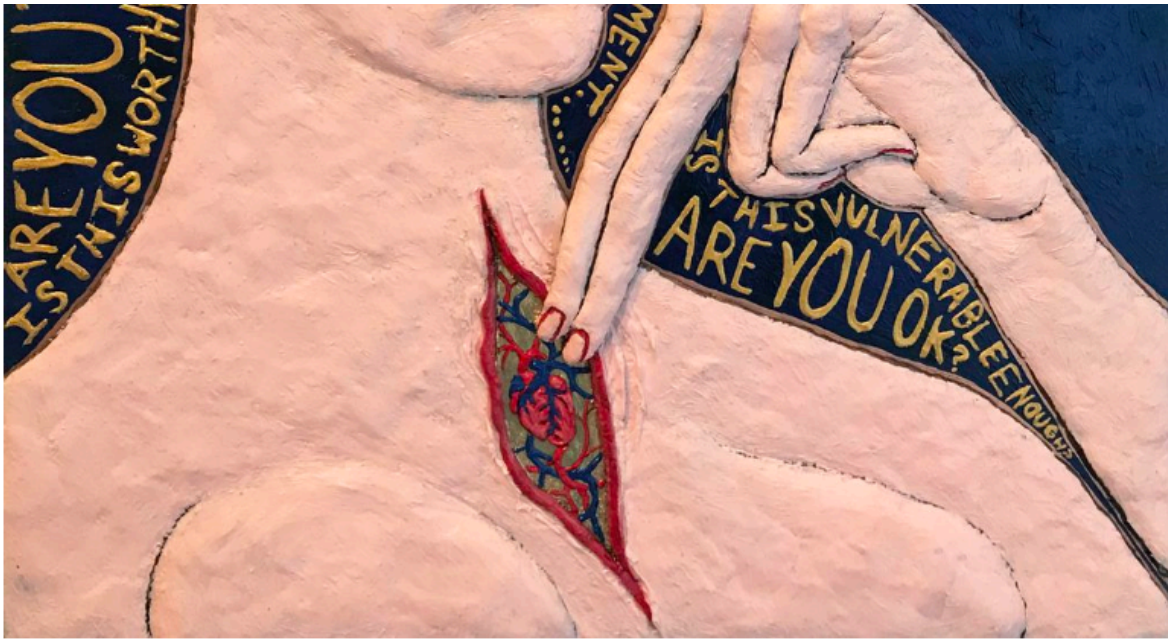
Neuroses and id and shadow material don’t engage unless they point us to something larger. Tarasenko achieves that with the sheer scope of “You Can’t Teach Old Dogs New Tricks.” Otherwise, she’s merely, if artfully, leading us into her own mire.

ANASTASIYA TARASENKO: THE SUM OF OUR PARTS

At Steven Zevitas Gallery, 450 Harrison Ave., through Feb. 29. 617-778-5265,

www.stevenzevitasgallery.com





A detail from Anastasiya Tarasenko's "Self Portrait of the Artist, By the Artist, To the Artist." ANASTASIYA TARASENKO/STEVEN ZEVITAS GALLERY

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