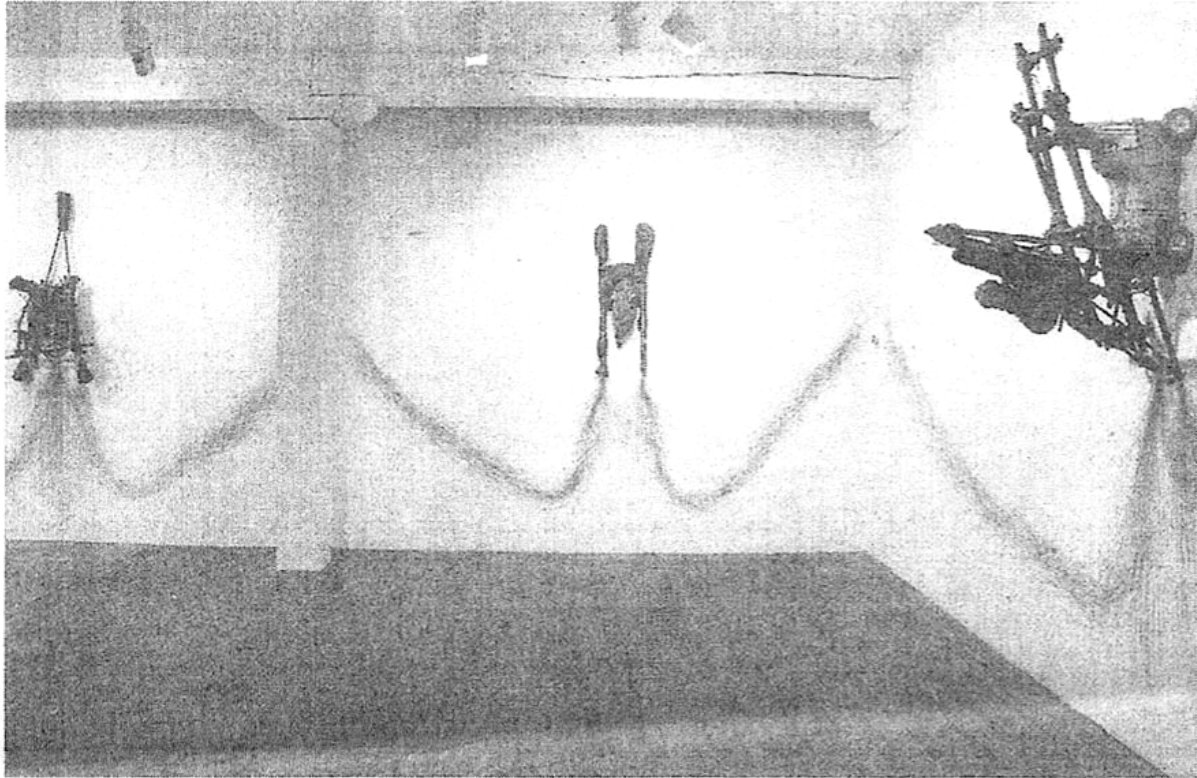


Smith Roberta, 'Year of the Rat - Kim Jones's war-torn, fluently hybrid art is more germane than ever, as proved by his latest exhibition at Pierogi'. The New York Times, 29 February 2008.



PIEROGI

'YEAR OF THE RAT' Kim Jones's war-torn, fluently hybrid art is more germane than ever, as proved by his latest exhibition at Pierogi. His primary theme, directly or indirectly, is war and its toxic effects, a subject inspired partly by his experiences as a marine in Vietnam.

Mr. Jones erupted on the Los Angeles performance-art scene in the mid-1970s in the persona of Mudman, a shaman-warrior-penitent covered in mud and harnessed with a bristling mass of sticks. In the first room several stick apparatuses hang far apart on the walls, part forbidding traps, part power figures. Wavy-lined wall drawings flow between them like currents of attract-repel energy. Their dates reflect Mr. Jones's tendency to mend, resurface and refresh continually. The much-painted "Rat Dog" (1973-1980-1986-1998-2008), above, is at once a headdress, an effigy and a figure in a prison stock; it belongs to a rodent art tradition stretching from Disney's Mickey Mouse to Art Spiegelman's Maus.

In the second gallery drawings build on documentary photographs of the Mudman performances. (Two feature "Rat Dog.") Heightening their sense of alienation and oppressiveness with ink and acrylic, they recast Mudman as an underground comic character while showcasing Mr. Jones's draftsmanship.

"Rat House," dated 1973-2008, is a large white dollhouse — light-handed yet exact — originally built for Mr. Jones's mother. Now it teems with dozens of black plastic rats — constants in his art that recall his Vietnam experience. While politically apt, this piece will doubtlessly improve as the artist revisits it.

Like war or memories of war, Mr. Jones's artworks may never be entirely finished. He will continue to adjust and refurbish them, exorcising demons that, much as we might think otherwise, are not only his. (Through March 10, 177 North Ninth Street, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, 718-599-2144, pierogi2000.com.)

ROBERTA SMITH

