

Ken Johnson, "Art in Review: Olaf Breuning," *The New York Times*, October 24, 2008, pp. C31

Olaf Breuning

Metro Pictures
519 West 24th Street, Chelsea
Through Nov. 8

Displayed on a lumpy white ceramic pedestal, a found-object sculpture by Olaf Breuning consists of a scale balancing a bucketful of soft pink rubber breasts and a stack of old books. If this piece, titled "The Big Challenge," strikes you as a funny and possibly profound meditation on tension between the carnal body and the abstract mind, then Mr. Breuning is for you.

A hilarious travelogue by Mr. Breuning, satirizing the West's romance with exotic, non-Western cultures, was one of the hits of this year's Whitney Biennial. His present exhibition, which includes sculptures, large photographs and about 40 small cartoon drawings, continues in a variety of entertaining and sometimes movingly poetic ways to connect the ridiculous and the sublime.

His "20 Dollar Bill" is a large photograph of five grinning black boys, each holding up for the camera a piece of paper currency. They appear to be standing at the edge of a dump site, presumably in Africa. At once comical and sobering, it captures the enormity of world poverty in a deceptively ingenuous image.

In another large photograph a

Photoshopped flock of birds in the sky over a forest spell out: "Why can you not be nice with nature? What is wrong with you?" The silly faux innocence gets at a truly urgent question.

Mr. Breuning is an inexhaustibly inventive cartoonist. "My Opening," which depicts anthropomorphic wine glasses conversing in a gallery, reveals the Bacchic foundation of the art world's favorite ritual. **KEN JOHNSON**

