

METRO PICTURES

Reid, Hilary. "Transforming Daddy Issues Into Art," *T - The New York Times Style Magazine blog* (November 6, 2015).

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"Bad Dad," a diptych by the artist Camille Henrot.

Joe Jackson, James Joyce, Darth Vader, Lucius Malfoy and Brutus all have one thing in common: They're "Bad Dads," according to the French multimedia artist Camille Henrot, whose new show of interactive sculptures and drawings opens at Metro Pictures this week. Henrot's definition of the term extends beyond the biological to include any authority figure that abuses power — a parent, sure, but also the government, the police or even the Internet. In preparing for her upcoming show, Henrot wondered what strategies people might use to "balance this dependent relationship." One strategy: to call a hotline.

Inspired in equal parts by emergency phones and toys, Henrot created several bright, playful telephones for her new show, each accompanied by a script co-written by the poet Jacob Bromberg (with whom Henrot worked on her 2013 film, "Grosse Fatigue"). Visitors can pick up plastic receivers and listen to a series of questions that lead to advice for modern conundrums. For those who want to complain about an unsavory stranger or unruly friend, there is the hotline "Enough is Enough" — which also includes the option to complain about the hotline itself. Then there's the "Bad Dawg/Best Friend Forever Hotline," which incorporates dogs of both varieties: the canine kind ("Press 2 if he chews up your shoes") and the bad-boyfriend kind. ("Press 6 if your dog wakes you up during thunderstorms and texts you at all hours of the night, even getting his friends to text you because he is afraid of you cheating.") The "Bad Dad & Beyond" hotline takes technology woes to a new level: "Does he sacrifice children to Moloch and perform unexpected reboots?" a voice asks. "Has he been infected by a porn virus?" Press 0 for yes and 1 for no.

Henrot's works combine the lighthearted, twisted and political. In large watercolor drawings that recall the fluid lines of Matisse, familiar images of cute animals and mythological figures take on murky meanings. In the diptych "Bad Dad," Henrot renders a jovial father pelican eating his scared, fluffy offspring. Another painting, "Trickle-Down Effect," depicts a row of four wolves joyously copulating all at once. Charming but unsettling, these pastel-colored paintings return to what Henrot calls "the ambivalence of our relationship with the authorities we depend on."

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