




STARS

Andy Campbell, "Pippa Garner," *Artforum Critics' Picks*, 2017.

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The genre of prop comedy is too easily dismissed. Think of the groans or eye rolls elicited by the mere mention of Carrot Top or Gallagher—two performers who are readily aligned with the form. What often gets lost in this general annoyance, though, is the comic's ability to fuse, and sometimes counter, cultural norms and expectations via the mechanical processes of prototyping and invention. When done right, the results of such comedy are as compelling as they are challenging and can amount to a critique of labor under capitalism (the gimmick, as Sianne Ngai points out in her recent lecture "The Theory of the Gimmick," is first and foremost a labor-saving device). Pippa Garner's work floats a maligned form of comedy into an art context—which she has arguably done for decades, as a 1982 appearance on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* attests—wherein drawings, sculptural objects, and videos satirize cultural consumption at every turn.



The zingers come fast and furious in her meticulous comix-like drawings such as *Sell Your \$elf*, ca. 1990s. In this work the artist imagines a "foot-in-the door" shoe, an oxford whose wings hinge out to literally prevent a door from closing in the wearer's face; a flat-footed visual articulation of social mobility. This humor is also evident in three videos where Garner performs both male and female personas (even the artist's own gender transition finds no quarter from her mocking sensibility). *Tinker Tantrum*, 2013, for example, introduces the viewer to Gadget Girl and Gadget Guy in an "in'faux'mercial" for various upgrades on traditional headphones. In the words of Gadget Girl: "If you're going to strap something onto your skull, it should be ornamental and make a personal statement—the perfect way to tell the world what's on your mind." Garner is, indeed, the mother of invention.

