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Sue Coe, *Woman walks into Bar—is Raped by 4 men on the pool table—while 20 men watch*, 1983, mixed media and collage on paper, 91 1/2 x 113".

New York

SUE COE, PPOW Gallery:

This month's gallery tour took me to several galleries in parts of New York's Lower East Side that are ordinarily visited only by outsiders who happen to be dope addicts. I actually turned back on my way to one gallery, but this one is on a safe block and it was there that I saw Sue Coe's powerful show, a show having a lot to do with the abutment of art and junk and junk a few blocks east.

Sue Coe paints horror beautifully, ugliness elegantly, and monstrosity with precise sanity. In a piece called *It's Like a Jungle*, 1983, inspired by the Grandmaster Flash rap-realism hit song (the words are there in the picture), everything's black and gray and red. A hypodermic syringe (AKA works, set, Johnson, *parato*) is turning into a lizard. There are gang leathers, a guy with punk-spike hair and lizard pinball eyes, wolves, "eats" signs, and snakes. Christ or a bum look-alike staggers by a liquor store. It's all semicollage, perspective and scale gone mad.

The largest piece in the show was *Woman walks into Bar—is Raped by 4 men on the pool table—while 20 men watch*, 1983. Beyond the range of the *New York Post* this might be taken as fiction, but Coe throws an actual *Post* front page in for extra subrealism—in big red headlines, "SLAUGHTER IN THE SKY"—to accompany her nightmare-time palette of graphite and gore. Zombies transmigrate and mutate right next to the "Defender" video war game and cigarette machine. There's the pool table, there's the victim, there's the rap-

ist, there's the cues and the queue.

Coe is a stunning draftsman, and to say she has a flair for the dramatic is like calling a mugger an interloper. I understand that she is from England, which may have helped her notice that something rather unusual is going on around here, and in South Africa and around Bobby Sands' bed. Her works are beautiful in abeyance, light held hostage. Maybe one of the big ones should be donated to a museum in, like, Iowa. I like the multiple etchings, too, particularly *Charlie Parker going to wash dishes at Jimmy's Chicken Shack in Harlem*, 1982. It's kind of sad, kind of cool, kind of blue, but all black and white and no red in this one except in your head, and it's small enough to walk on by when you feel like it.

—GLENN O'BRIEN