



## ***Normal Bob: Pray for Satan***

Curated by Becka Jean Marsh

Launching Thursday, May 7, 2020 at [macp.sva.edu/pray-for-satan](http://macp.sva.edu/pray-for-satan)

MA Curatorial Practice at the School of Visual Arts is pleased to present *Normal Bob: Pray for Satan*, curated by Becka Jean Marsh.

*Pray for Satan* is the first online exhibition to map thirty years of artwork by Normal Bob Smith (Robert Hain), whose works in a variety of media provoke uncomfortable questions regarding religion, freedom of speech, sexual predators, exploitation, and offbeat kinks. *Pray for Satan* asks how Normal Bob's skill for stimulating debate reflects the messiness of contemporary discourse more generally: What is too *risqué* to say? Is anything too sacred for satire? Why are we, as a society, afraid to discuss certain issues? Channeling the power of punk, Normal Bob's controversial artworks challenge normativity and together form an important case study in radical individualism, religious criticism, and contemporary art thriving outside the mainstream.

One of his most controversial series, *Jesus Dressup!* (1990–present) depicts the Christian Messiah as a doll that can be adorned with accompanying mix-and-match outfits. Iterated in various forms, *Jesus Dressup!* questions the limits of political correctness, freedom of speech, heresy, and belief. Another prominent series, *Amazing Strangers* (2006–present), consists of online videos and short stories taking a slice-of-life approach to examining some of the most odd, overzealous, and overlooked people in New York City. As in many of the illustrations seen throughout his work, Normal Bob's portraits embody the elegance of unconventional and often ostracized people—freaks, female bodybuilders, and transsexual porn stars. Normal Bob is consistently concerned with social equity and morality, and, as a peculiar and playful online exhibition, *Pray for Satan* shows how these deeper issues can be invoked with tongue-in-cheek wit.

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### ABOUT MA CURATORIAL PRACTICE, THE SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS, NEW YORK

The Master of Arts degree in Curatorial Practice at the School of Visual Arts is a two-year program that focuses on intensive professional training, with a thorough grounding in the study of art and exhibition history, research, and theory. Students work with leading experts in an academic setting and in internships around the world, providing continuous opportunities to gain practical experience, acquire intellectual breadth, and develop a professional network in the field. The program takes full advantage of the vast number of arts institutions in New York City and the professionals working here and visiting, who constitute our distinguished faculty and weekly guest speakers. Go to [macp.sva.edu](http://macp.sva.edu) to find out more.