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**Chris Hipkiss**

Cavin-Morris

560 Broadway, at Prince Street

SoHo

Through Feb. 26

Chris Hipkiss's large, fantastic pencil drawings are so strange that one can't help wonder about the person behind the work. Might these intensely detailed, dystopic visions of nature under the baleful dominion of industry — with pretty, hermaphroditic warriors in sexy outfits appearing here and there — be the product of a teenage Henry Darger? Or a latter-day William Blake? But then a certain illustrational quality could suggest the hand of a trained graphic artist mimicking the look of visionary Outsider Art.

Reportedly, Mr. Hipkiss — who was born in 1964, quit school at age 16 and is entirely self-taught — leads a quiet life in a small village in England. He is married and in his spare time is an environmental activist. But whatever the biographical facts, in his pictures of vast fields of industrialized agriculture surrounding giant buildings and bizarre mechanical structures, one senses the drive of a genuinely off-beat imagination struggling with powerful psychological tensions.

The artist conceives of his epic, continuing narrative as a story of war between masculine culture and feminine nature. Perhaps this reflects an inner tension between a wildly fertile imagination and a fierce will to dominate, inch by inch, the pictorial field.

Seen in greater quantities, one fears Mr. Hipkiss's work might begin to seem repetitious. In this small show, it remains fascinating.

KEN JOHNSON