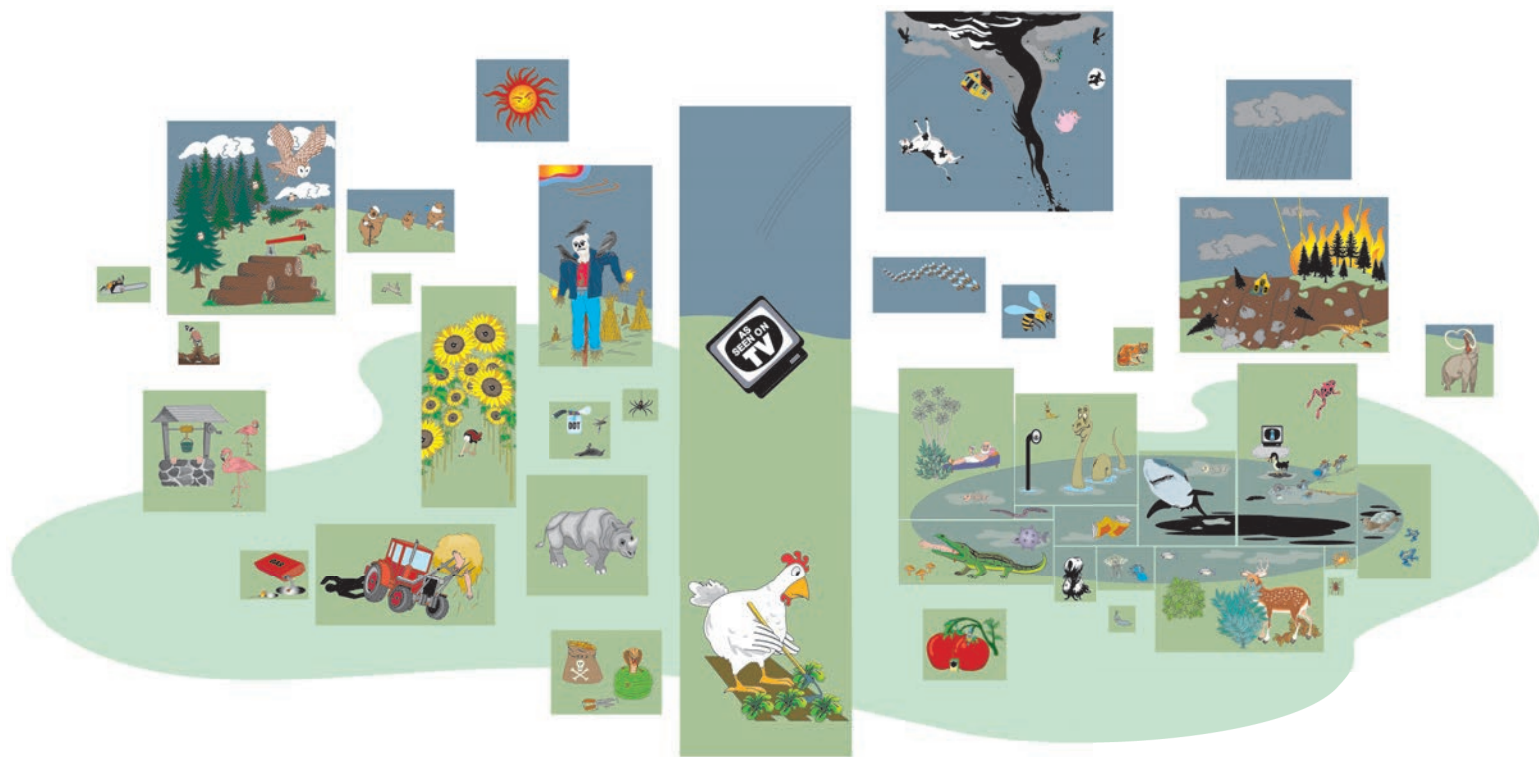


Chicken Little and the Culture of Fear

Hors d'oeuvres

Nancy Chunn



2003-4 • acrylic on canvas • 38 canvases • 102 x 198 inches including amoeba

In the traditional telling, Chicken Little gets hit on the head by an acorn or rock. In mine she gets hit by a TV. All of the scenes feature the 'As Seen On TV' image. The arrangement of the piece is designed like sound bites. A painted amoeba shape on the walls holds the individual canvases together.

SCENE I: THE GARDEN

As **Chicken Little** is sowing some leafy veggies in her garden, "**AS SEEN ON TV**" is about to conk her on the head. The scene was set—silly, quaint, absurd—and some environmental fears are exposed. The **spotted owl** is endangered and his habitat is being destroyed by **deforestation**. You can see the **bears** waving goodbye. As we know, the Earth is warming up big time. Our angry **sun** has even burnt a **scarecrow**. When I painted this in 2003 **acid rain** was the big issue. It's represented here, with lightning, igniting a **forest fire**, destroying the **trees**, including roots, leading to a **mudslide**, destroying property and killing people. However a small **raptor** gets away. The **pond** is getting polluted. One of the **frogs** has an extra leg, and a couple of **fish** have lost all their skin. They say **Dawn dish detergent** really works on oiled ducks, but I can't say; I haven't tried it myself. The smallest canvas I've ever worked on houses the **deer tick**, which as we know, spreads Lyme Disease. The kitsch **plastic pink flamingos** cause a different type of sickness, and they certainly can't chase away the **killer bees**. But perhaps the **rhino** can. She appears in the painting for absolutely no reason.



2004-5 • acrylic on canvas • 48 canvases • 129 x 329 inches including amoeba

One of the issues that I had to deal with in creating this eleven scene narrative was how to get Chicken Little in and out of each scene, while staying connected to the content of the overall piece.

SCENE II: THE BATHROOM

Before **Chicken Little** entered the bathroom, the **water pipe burst**, flooding the room. Under the watchful eye of **Henny Penny**, one of Chicken Little's posse of five, she avoided all the life-threatening **tangled wires**, getting to the **mirror** to check out the awful bump on her head, which caused her to have a distorted vision of herself. Like many female chickens, she saw herself **losing feathers** and **putting on weight**. Throughout the series I have used references from TV and movies. For example, in the bathtub there is a reference to **Psycho**, and **Titanic** with its **iceberg**. The **shelves** are filled with personal items including **Beak Wax**, **Feather Fluff**, as well as an **anarchist cup**. There is a dangerous, unidentified product that **causes cancer**. Some of her bathroom reading, as expected, includes **Barnyard News**, and **Show Chicken Magazine**, which has a very sexy cock on the front cover. Like many of us, her **medicine cabinet** is stocked with **Big Pharma's products**, to ease the tensions of the day. She seems oblivious to the dangerous chemicals in the **cosmetics** that she uses. But the crazed **bunny slippers** are very aware. I will leave the meaning of the **razor blades** up to the viewer. It's something we don't discuss in public. However, we can discuss a particular New York fear—and this is a **gator** popping up unannounced from out of your **toilet**. I personally am more fearful of the empty **toilet paper holder**.



2005-6 • acrylic on canvas • 39 canvases • 139 x 272 inches including amoeba

In making this booklet, I myself just realized how active this wall is. Everything is in motion.

SCENE III: THE KITCHEN

The kitchen is bursting with energy: the **blender** is busting its top, as are the **exploding spoiled cans**, the overactive **toaster**, and the **popcorn**. I refused, however, to blow up the **penguin on the TV**. I'll leave that to Monty Python. The **mutant monster** hiding in the **oven** has nothing to do with the **dead parrot**—that tragedy was caused by the **teflon frying pan**. (Chicken Little had no knowledge that the fumes from cooking on teflon will kill birds.)

The slow speed of the **lobsters** successfully avoiding the cooking pot is in contrast to the **submerged cat** in the **washing machine**, which is creating both bubbles and fire. The **wiggling knives** are anxious to join the action. Below them, the **vacuum** is sucking the **pink poodle** who is trying to get to his **dog bowl** underneath the maniacal medley of **GMO-modified foods**. They look cute but could be deadly. As **Cocky Locky** passes obliviously outside, **Henny Penny** helps **Chicken Little** get an **ice pack**.



2004-6 • acrylic on canvas • 51 canvases • 132 x 114 inches including amoeba

When I was painting this wall, I noticed that Chicken Little's parents were both on the same line in the family tree, and I said to my assistant Tom, "We really made a mistake, or did we?" She now is a product of incest. Maybe that's why she is such an alarmist.

SCENE IV: THE BEDROOM

Duckie Daddles, popping through the **window** on a dark and stormy night, greets **Cocky** and **Henny**. To light his entrance, I borrowed Jean Cocteau's Orpheus's **gloved hand** passing through the wall holding **candles**. Are they being observed by a suspicious **suitcase**? **Chicken Little** is totally distracted from the **bedbugs** and the monstrous **fox** under her bed when the **police** come to arrest her for removing her **mattress tag**—a "cardinal crime". For the BBC's **Singing Detective**, this is just another bust. I hope they let her grab her **hat** before carting her off in the paddy wagon. Sitting comfortably under portraits of **Chicken Little's parents**, **Death**, passively look on. This is no big deal. But **Chicken Little**, terrified of going to prison, relives her childhood fears: **heights**, **attics**, **basements**, the **dark**, and one of my personal fears, being **dragged to the loony bin**. In the cloud are some of her worst chicken nightmares, **being force-fed antibiotics**, **laying dozens of eggs**, **running down the road naked**, **being sacrificed by a satanic cult**, and **being carried away by the spotted owl**. Many of her foreign relatives have perished in the **bird flu massacre**, so Chicken Little fears going extinct like the **dodo** and ending up in a **bucket of fried chicken**.



2014-16 • acrylic and giclee print canvas, and 3-D printed sculptures
27 canvases • 134 x 244 inches including amoeba

As I was finishing up The Diner, I needed to decide which wall to do next. I had two left, The Jail and Fox News. I decided to do Fox News first because I wanted the Jail to be more timely, to make sure I got in as many of the hateful creatures as possible. I'm not sure if I made the right choice since we all know what's currently happening at Fox News. I may need to attend to that in a future piece.

SCENE V: THE JAIL

Incarcerated for removing her mattress tag, **Chicken Little** cowers in the **women's shower area**, awaiting **bailout** by her **friends**. The Jail houses 236 real world **undesirables**, **crooks**, **pedophiles**, **cultural icons** gone bad, and **dangerous batshit political crazies**, plus **products** that should be banned, and 183 **cartoon characters**, including **guards**, and wait for it, 6 **wolf guard dogs**. The footprint is loosely based on the layout of Rikers Island in New York City. (Check out the Jail pamphlet to identify who's in, why, and where.) There are, however, a few dangerous entities in the process of escaping who will continue their dastardly behavior: a **drone**, a **bank**, a **Coke can**, a **football**, a **bottle of opioids**, and **Donald Trump**.

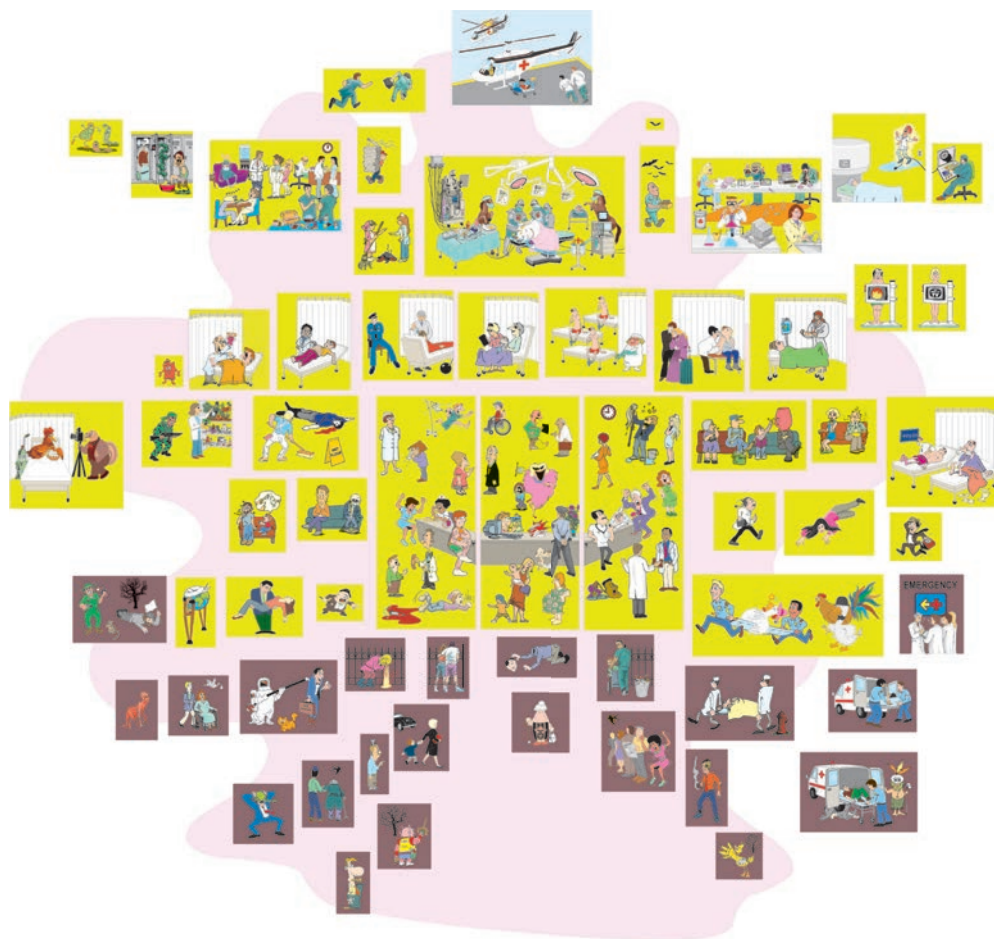


2004-7 • acrylic on canvas • 64 canvases • 134 x 315 inches including amoeba

The license plate number on Chicken Little's car: "ART NOW" was actually the plate number of my rotary engine, silver Mazda, in the late 1970's in California. The car was totaled after I got in an accident. I never replaced it because I moved to New York.

SCENE VI: THE ROAD

A newly freed woman, **Chicken Little and her friends** pile into a **pink Caddy** and hit the road where they're confronted by **road rage**. **Death** leads the way, trailing an **oil slick**. The **angry poodle** is driving a truck advertising Salvador Dali's ***Un Chien Andalou***-brand dog food. He probably is responding to a whistle from the **cops**, who are oblivious to the chaos of the intersection, where a George W. Bush-esqe **cowboy** tries and fails to shoot **Bin Laden**; the **nerve gas truck** is more apt to kill him first. The product has already caused the driver to hallucinate **dancing pink elephants**, and has also killed a **man in the grass**. I wouldn't consider portraying road rage without having **O.J.** in his **white Bronco** threatening to kill himself. The **little old lady** from Pasadena brandishes her umbrella at him. You can tell how angry she is by the **expletives** on her **monster truck's** license plate. Speaking of license plates, you'll notice a variety. **Mexico** beckons **young guys** to drink and get laid, as well as **socialites** to get some discount nips and tucks. A few **immigrants** are sneaking in, while **tourists** are returning with hidden marijuana. Notice **Thelma & Louis** with **Brad Pitt** in the backseat of the **blue convertible**. Sad to say, because of the political climate in the US, many **factories** are also on the move, and **scientists** are going to England for stem cell research and techies are scurrying to India. And the saddest of all—**Chicken Little and her posse** get into a **terrible accident**.



2007-8 • acrylic on canvas • 63 canvases • 139 x 148 inches including amoeba

There were so many hospitals fears that I decided to divide them into two walls, the ER and Main Hospital. This of course had nothing to do with the fact that this installation was conceived as a sight specific installation at the Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York City where there are eleven walls, and two walls are back to back in the physical space.

SCENE VII: THE ER

A group of characters wait to get into the ER. The **doctors smoking** outdoors are oblivious to the masses trying to get in: **hazmat guys** carrying a **businessman** on their hook, a **socialite** dragging her **son** from their **Bentley**, and **Chicken Little** being carried in on a **stretcher**. The main hub is a disaster scene of **people jumping** to get attention from the **overworked staff**. Even a **sick world** on crutches is being ignored. A **drug addict veteran** is about to hold up a **pharmacist** who's feeding and watering her **pharmaceutical plants**. **Henny** was lucky to receive a bed, with **Turkey Lurkey** holding vigil, but is still awaiting a doc to check her out. One poor soul has died in the waiting room and has become a **skeleton**. The **triplets** are about to undergo a very unpleasant procedure. Doctors and nurses are **snacking and yakking** in the **lounge** while a few break away to attend to patients arriving on **helicopters**, one of which is in flames. The **laboratory** may be working on something that can aid in the **operating room** next door, where **Humpty Dumpty** is undergoing emergency surgery by **all the King's horses and all the King's men**. At the moment he's still alive. However, a **nurse and a cleaning person** argue over a **spontaneously combusted patient** who is definitely dead.



2007-10 • acrylic on canvas • 61 canvases • 143 x 137 inches including amoeba

The Main Hospital is a separate wing from the chaotic ER. Whatever disorder that's occurring is more or less held tightly in place by an organized grid with elevators designating the various floors, with some spill over into the hallways.

SCENE VIII: THE MAIN HOSPITAL

The seventh floor is the **general floor**. The double room is shared by an unlikely pair; a **romantic staff encounter** has pushed the **swine flu** victim from his bed, and the **Hells Angels rider** learns he's sicker than he thought. The only place where you would see a **wannabe Napoleon** wooing **Josephine** and a man who thinks he's a **nesting doll**, together with a **psychiatrist who hypnotized himself** would be in a **psychiatric ward**. Let's leave this nut house and visit **Duckie Daddles** who's in to get his beak straightened. We'll wait to see if the patient with the **bandaged head** in the next bed has been successfully transformed into one of the **Twilight Zone pig-people**. A couple of other film reference occur in pediatrics and obstetrics: the **Ghostbusters** are on sight attending to a **boy who's seeing ghosts**, and the father seeing a **demon** in an ultrasound is a homage to **Rosemary's Baby**, which won both an Oscar and a Golden Globe. Nearby, **Octomom 2.0** is giving birth to multiple babies after consulting with a **fertility goddess**. Too bad her **husband** is unable to help. Downstairs an **HMO agent** is bringing in a **witch doctor** to do **Lucy Goosey's** beak surgery because it's cheaper. On the first floor, strategically placed across the street from a probable **radioactive transformer station**, is the **gift shop**, stocked with amusing items from **good luck charms** to a **jar of leaches**, **man-eating plants**, and my personal favorite, a **Hello Kitty tombstone**, plus **cigarettes**. In the **business office**, tears of pain and outrage are experienced by a **father wheeling in his family fortune**, including his **first born son**, to pay his bills. The **basement** houses **experimental surgery**, where a **man's head is being grafted onto a fly's body**. While clones of the unholy beast test out their new wings, **pod grown leggy blondes** are being mass produced for purchase by Fox News.



2011-14 • acrylic on canvas • 25 canvases • 134 x 372 inches including amoeba

Since I personally only frequent one restaurant in the City of New York, I thought it might be fun to see what I'm missing by creating this diner. Of all the eleven walls, this one actually took the longest to conceive and execute. I had another design in mind and even ordered the canvases from Syman Art, when I decided the scale was all wrong; everything was too large. So I started again and ordered twenty-five additional canvases. The expensive Belgian cotton canvas I'd been using ran out, and was discontinued. After calling every art supply store in the US, I switched to the cheapest canvas available, Army Duck because it had a similar texture.

SCENE IX: THE DINER

After spending time in the hospital where they couldn't get a decent meal, the **Chicken Little posse** get themselves to the local diner where they feast on a **huge salad of greens, fruit, and bugs**. The black and white tiled 50's-style diner is made up of booths, tables, and counters where the usual wedge issues are being served. In the **waiting area** a kid is playing a **Chicken Little "Fear" video game** while a "**maitre d**" assigns people to their tables. Over the rear booths, **replicas of famous paintings** are hung. Over **When Harry Met Sally** is a detail from **Raphael's The Triumph of Galatea**. Eating under **Magritte's The Sun of Man** are a duo from **Pulp Fiction**. Characters from **Degas' The Absinthe Drinkers** are served beneath **Dennis Hopper's Automat**. One of the many wedge issues, abortion, is featured underneath one of **Warhol's Campbell's Soup Cans**. The **Seinfeld** group eat under the gaze of a portrait of their missing member, **Kramer**. Under **Wayne Thiebaud's Lemon Cake**, rowdy kids are having a **food fight**, and over a prelude to a **Greco-Roman orgy** hangs **Lichtenstein's Temple of Apollo**.

The chaotic **kitchen and prep area** is in a hurry to serve hundreds. Behind the counter, the **octopus** is the only one who could serve the **Last Supper disciples** all at once. **Saturn Eating His Son** chose a space next to **Elvis**, who can't wait to tackle his **peanut butter, banana, and bacon sandwich**. The comedy table features **Bill Maher, Stephen Colbert, John Stewart, Matt Groening** (creator of the Simpsons), **Trey Parker and Matt Stone** (South Park) while **Gander** checks out **Sarah Silverman's** boobs. **Charles Heston** playing the role of **Moses** is protecting the **NRA table**. They are unfortunately close to the **Endangered Species' Sierra Club** meeting. The **anonymous press** are documenting the **Peta-member chef** who's tossing **shrimp cocktail sauce** onto a **fur clad model** wearing **\$675 Christian Louboutin shoes**. **Rush Limbaugh** disapproves of such a "barbaric insult". Is that ironic enough? **Henny** and **Vladimir Lenin** are admiring the fully stocked **salad bar**. The **nun** is advising the **pregnant teen** to put more food on her plate. She should be less like the **anorexics** sitting nearby and more like the **obese** or the **table of teenagers** with drug-fueled munchies feasting on **fried food and sweets**.

Occupy Wall Street protesters sit across from **teabaggers**. An **abusive customer** is tormenting a **waitress**; it's just a matter of time before he starts on the **immigrants** in front of him. **Popeye's Wimpy** admires a **stack of burgers** while a **chubby tween** has eyes on the **gay couple's wedding cake**. A **creationist** stuffs his ears, rejecting **Darwin**, and is blind to the **fish stepping from the primordial pea soup**. A table of **untethered eyeballs** are getting their fill of **beta carotene**.

What's a local neighborhood diner without a **shootout**? I chose to bring back ***Dick Tracey*** and his yellow trench coat. He's fighting **Pruneface**, while **The Mole** and **Flattop Jones** lie dead nearby. The **robots** are not disturbed by the murder, nor does it seem to disturb the **interfaith dialogue**. The **business group** is too busy doing business to even eat. A problem arose when I decided we should have a table of **rowdy sports fanatics**. Which sport would they be watching on the **bar TV**? The most unlikely one was the rather sedate game of **golf**. The rest of the bar is occupied by the **neighborhood regulars, the up-and-comers, and the ones out to score**. **Picasso's lonely *Absinthe Drinker*** sits alone at a corner table.



2010-11 • acrylic on canvas • 54 canvases • 132 x 243 inches including amoeba

Because the wedge issues of the Diner would always be around, I made a decision to work on Poortown first, after the Main Hospital, because the country was in a financial crisis called the great recession, which I personally call a depression. I divided it into four sections: downtown on the bottom, a park on the left, suburbs on the right, and the projects on top. As a challenge, I decided to do a nighttime scene.

SCENE X: POORTOWN

On **Chicken Little**'s way to the King she passes through Poortown, which is in the midst of a **financial meltdown** I blame on **Citibank**, **AIG**, **Bank of America**, and **Goldman Sachs**, whose **headquarters** dominates the skyline. **Crowds of protesters** in front contrast ex-employees who are leaving, having been served their **pink slips**. The **federal agent**, looking like a gangster is **pumping taxpayer dollars** into **Citibank** to cover their loss. **Banksy's tag, the rat holding the "you lie" sign** seems to say it all as the **Meryl Lynch bull** runs amok with his **cleaver**.

The **fowls** disperse and spend the evening surrounded by fears, sales, and protesters. **Chicken Little** is crossing the road, at a corner where a **knock-off bag pitchman** sells his wares. **Lucy Goosey** and a **teenage girl** are both looking at the **accident**. It must remind her of her own accident on the Road. **Turkey Lurkey** has settled himself on the **fire escape** above **Closeout Fashions**, documenting the **crime scene** with his **zoom lens**. Righteous **Gander** glares at a **barefoot man** ripping off the **mailbox**, I presume looking for checks. **Henny Penny**, intensely watches a **three-card monty**, luckily avoiding the **falling crane**. She could have

been crushed. **Cocky Locky** finds himself being **held up** in the park by a **young boy**. The **newly homeless white-collar guy** bathing in the fountain is not coming to the rescue; he has no pants on. **Ducky Daddles** is mesmerized watching the **bag lady** feed the **pigeons**. Or is she poisoning them? No one notices the hand of the **drowning person** in the pond.

For some reason, none of the characters ended up in the **suburbs** or **projects**, but that doesn't mean nothing is going on. In the **suburbs**, **vultures** hang out on a **leafless tree** outside an **abandoned home**. Perhaps someone is squatting because there is **light in the upstairs window**. A **family** is distracted by a **boy on a bike** about to take a tumble. They don't notice the **thief** climbing into their second story window. An **intentional fire** is set by an unemployed **white collar worker**, for the insurance money. Even the upper middle class are downsizing, by cutting off part of their **McMansion**. The **projects** are the same as usual, with a **pool hall**, **gang fight**, and **pawn shop**, where a **child** is bringing in his worldly possessions to pawn. A **european tourist** is strolling past the **graffiti building** where **Jean-Jacques Rousseau's statement**, "**Eat the Rich**" is scrawled. The **kids** practice their dance moves out front. **Arguments**, **children alone**, a **depressed man**, and a **mugging**, are seen inside. A **drive-thru fast food chain** shares a building with a **drive-thru gun shop**, and the **unemployment office** and **soup kitchen** are seeing more people. One can't wait any longer and is about to jump.





2013-15 • acrylic and giclee print on panel • 43 panels • 165 x 240 inches including amoeba

While researching the folk tale of Chicken Little there seemed to be three endings. One was, she and her friends get to the king to report that the sky is falling and he gives her an umbrella to ward off falling objects. I always personally thought of the Travelers Insurance logo as the protector. The second ending I read was, when they get to the king, he would hear of nothing, and told her she was crazy and to go home. The third, which seems to be the most popular, was that they never get to the king. On the way, they meet up with Foxy Loxy, who with offers to protect them, lures them into his den and eats them all up.

SCENE XI: FOX NEWS

Naturally, I chose the latter for my ending. **Chicken Little and her friends** are consumed by the **fox**, and this time it's **Fox News**. She becomes one of the **leggy blond anchorwomen**. Her **friends** take positions as **director, interviewer, talking heads**, and **crew**. The format differs from the other walls. I made it in the form of an **American flag** because to me **Fox News** is "America's news" just as the Dallas Cowboys are "America's team". The **white stripes** contain **blocks of quotes**; the **red stripes** hold **modified screen grabs**, most from various **Fox News outlets**; and the **stars** are represented by **Fox talking heads** (see Fox News pamphlet). All the words are what these people have said onscreen, although backgrounds have been changed to fit the text. One of my favorites is the one with **Dr. Russell** saying, "**Girls are more likely to have hateful little minds.**" The **cartoon girl** will be blowing him up shortly. **Hannity's** face on the **douche bag** is another gem. It's simple and precise. A more

complex one is **Jon Stewart** talking about “**Mess O’ Potamia**” anchored by **Shepard Smith** in his new **Fox newsroom** with neocons **Paul Wolfowitz** and **Bill Kristoll**, and the two headed beast, **Lindsay Graham** and **John McCain**. I’ll share one that I find disgusting: **Bob Beckel** reporting that a **College Public Safety Department** is advising women to **vomit** to deter attackers. A more despicable one is **Bill Cunningham**, guest hosting the **Hannity** show, telling a female peer, **Tamara Holder**, “**You shut up. Know your role and shut your mouth.**” From the despicable to the absurd is **Glenn Beck’s** conversation with **John Stossel** on the best way to save **endangered species**. These jokers came up with: “**Eat them.**” Finally, over on **Fox Business**, **Eric Bolling** is creating an epic miniseries by declaring the border between **Texas** and **Mexico** so porous that “**ebola, or ISIS, or ebola on the backs of ISIS could come through**”. Is that outlandish, or batshit crazy? You decide.

As you see this is not a pretty story—buckle up, it’s not going away. Fox News may morph into something more insane.





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