

ARTFORUM

DAVID LYNCH

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
118-128 North Broad Street
September 13–January 11

-Chris Bors

For a generation of David Lynch devotees that know him as the filmmaker of foreboding, surreal films such as *Eraserhead* and *Blue Velvet*, and of the cult television series *Twin Peaks*, it may come as a revelation that he has been making paintings since the 1960s. Since the outré is inherent in his widely known medium, it is of no surprise that his visual art follows suit, with many examples straddling the line between neo-expressionism and art brut. The unsettling Francis Bacon-esque *Man Throwing Up*, 1967, is quite restrained formally despite its subject matter, featuring a three-dimensional visage spewing a noxious yellow-and-white matter. More recent mixed-media conglomerations, including the oversize *I Burn Pinecone* and *Throw in Your House*, 2009, of a crudely rendered man holding a lit match amid a highly built-up surface, lack a palpable sense of unease, due to their cartoonish quality. More forbidding is *Shadow of a Twisted Hand Across My*



David Lynch, *Woman with Screaming Head*, 1968, acrylic on canvas, 66 x 60".

House, 1998, whose heavy gray brushstrokes transform the everyday into something sinister, exploring childhood fears by channeling a time when one's imagination was unbounded.

The hybrid installation *Six Men Getting Sick*, 1967, a student work that is a precursor to Lynch's fully developed oeuvre, integrates film and animation with painting and sculpture to create a nightmarish scenario of group regurgitation. His early short films, such as *The Grandmother*, 1970, in which a young boy abused by his parents creates a doting grandmother from a vulval root that he grows from a seed, show the formation of a highly focused and intense creative artist who reveled in examining the disturbing and sinister aspects of life from the outset of his career.