

ARTFORUM

Scene & Herd: There Goes The Neighborhood

By Linda Yablonsky

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VERY YEAR, for the two weeks following Labor Day, the art and fashion worlds own New York. Runway shows overlap with gallery openings and gallerinas keep pace with modelistas. Last Wednesday, September 3, Rachel Feinstein colluded with Marc Jacobs, Marianne Boesky, Art Production Fund, and Performa to merge the two worlds with a single, season-starting event that painlessly outclassed the art parades of yore.

Dubbed “The Last Days of *Folly*,” Feinstein put it together for the closing of *Folly*, her summer-long exhibition of public sculpture in Madison Square Park. (Inspired, she said, by Ballet Russes and Fellini backdrops, her white aluminum, storybook houses and ships credibly simulate folded paper.) With the fashion crowd distracted by spring/summer ready-to-wear shows, her urban county fair attracted a heavy complement of art people, who would have felt more back-to-school if the mercury hadn’t climbed higher than it had all summer. Feinstein, for one, was sweltering in a latex print dress by Giles Deacon, attended by a young guy and gal in-waiting wearing Duro Olowu, two of several designers involved in the festivities, which included a number of musical interludes and pantomimed actions. Cynthia Rowley outdid herself by creating a human fountain the model Esmerelda Seay-Reynolds, decked out in a Rowley dress and twisting in a pool while water spouted from spigots tied to her wrists.

At twilight, the mainstage backdrop (Feinstein’s full-rigger) lit up with a Tony Oursler/Constance DeJong projection and whispers of “Who is *that!*” ricocheted through a crowd captivated by Angela McCluskey, one of two singers (Kalup Linzy was the other) who stopped pedestrian traffic in the park. (Linzy sang “Tight Pussy.”) There was more, a lot more—and a bang-up afterparty at Neue House, where summer tans deepened in the artificial light and the bar served mini-cans of Sofia, the blanc-de-blancs donated by Sofia Coppola and produced by her father’s winery.

The season began in earnest on Thursday with, by my count, sixteen galleries opening in Chelsea alone. Uptown, Dominique Lévy relieved the pressure with a lunchtime press preview of her quiet, maybe somnolent, Roman Opalka show including white-on-gray numbers paintings. Before his death in 2011, Opalka painted five million numerals on 233 canvases. That’s devotion! “Opalka’s paintings give you the chance to experience the passage of time like no one else,” Lévy said. Except maybe On Kawara or Alfred Jensen?

Downstairs, Emmanuel Perrotin was passing the time till his dinner at the Monkey Bar with “Float,” beaded Pop cartoons by the Iranian artist Farhad Moshiri, who added a couple of canvases with surfaces like the icing of a birthday cake stuck with a collection of threatening knives. Meanwhile, down in Chelsea, the industrious Nick Cave was withstanding an all-day preview of his double show at both of Jack Shainman’s Manhattan galleries, no Sound Suits in either one. But there were plenty of reclaimed ceramic tchotchkes fixed within treelike assemblages, contemptible racial caricatures reframed as objects deserving sympathy, and

gumshoe getups freighted with bling.

The preview went late and by the time night fell, the streets of Chelsea were clogged with so many people that either art now really is a public entertainment or every art school in the world sent its graduates to New York at once. “It doesn’t feel like an opening,” said Bard CCS director Tom Eccles, elbowing through the crush at Boesky’s reception for Roxy Paine. “This is like being on the High Line.” Or perhaps, considering the show’s centerpiece—a lifesize diorama of a TSA security checkpoint, carved out of wood—at an airport under siege.

It was equally jammed at Mitchell-Innes & Nash, where Justine Kurland was showing modest new photographs taken in and around auto-body shops she has visited while driving a car old enough to need frequent servicing. “Have you been across the street to Loretta Howard?” the Miami collector Marty Margulies asked. The line to get in for a group show of artists championed by Irving Sandler in the 1960s stretched down the sidewalk, but Helene Appel’s shy watercolor, encaustic, and oil paintings of common materials (textiles, puddles, plastic bags, raw meat) in the Berlin-based artist’s American debut at James Cohan offered a bit of respite. It quickly dissipated at Pace, where the galleries were so dense with hobnobbing chatterboxes that it was impossible to see David Hockney’s iPad drawings or Paul Graham’s new photographs.

Even more oppressive than the crowds was the new Chelsea taking shape before our eyes. Over the summer, Tenth Avenue, formerly a truck route where the sun used to shine over low-rise warehouse and residential buildings, has been plunged into darkness by the construction of new “luxury” high-rises on nearly every block. These scary glass monsters obscure the High Line and the galleries that attracted rapacious developers to the neighborhood in the first place. Construction walls and trailers, plastic orange barriers, and temporary, sometimes flooded walkways that force detours from the sidewalks make those galleries difficult to access and sometimes hard to find. Pretty soon, after the remaining nineteenth-century buildings are gone, the neighborhood will have lost its character altogether.

So that was annoying. However, when people are possessed, particularly by art, nothing will stop them from massing at the source of their pleasure, where contempt and consent happily cross swords. The troops kept trooping from one art emporium to another like well-behaved soldiers, even a man sporting a mechanical tie that flew from his throat like a startled bird.

Allan McCollum startles in a different way, as he continues to create a puzzle-like, unique shape for every person in the world, in a variety of bright colors—all made for him by a pastor who is expert with a scroll saw he uses to produce Christmas ornaments. At Petzel, McCollum did some matchmaking by showing the shapes as couples. It’s weird, but they really did evoke recognizable moments in a relationship. Walead Beshty, who was showing copper panels distressed by their use in previous months as gallery desks, announced another relationship by wearing a T-shirt printed with a cell phone number—Petzel’s, he said. Another kind of signage—possibly more meaningful for mature women—was Lily van der Stokker’s super-girly, obdurately feminist, toilet paper–stocked, pink-on-pink installation at Koenig & Clinton—just the right dose of wickedness all told.

With the sticky heat of the day turning suddenly into a pleasant evening, I arrived at Anton Kern’s gallery just before his dinner for Brian Calvin and Lothar Hempel in the garden at

Bottino. Among the brain trust of guests were gallery artists Dan McCarthy and Ellen Berkenblit, SculptureCenter curator Ruba Katrib, White Columns director Matthew Higgs, and Kitchen director Tim Griffin. Over the weekend, Griffin would present *Mäusebunker*, a new film by Hempel, who gave up this food for thought: “Google Translate is great if you want to be a poet.”

Friday night was almost restful. The personable galleries in the Tunnel building on far West Twenty-Seventh Street held sweet openings for Gordon Hall (at Foxy Production), John Divola (Wallspace), and Despina Stokou (Derek Eller), each with something to recommend it. “Gordon never uses gender-specific, proper pronouns,” dealer Michael Gillespie said of the gender-nonspecific Hall. “No him or her. Only *they*.” Divola was showing gorgeous black-and-white (mostly black) photographs from the 1990s for his second exhibition in New York. “It’s always nice to dig out work you haven’t seen in twenty years and take another look,” Divola said. “My hero,” said a smitten Wyatt Kahn.

Doubletakes were in order at Mary Boone’s Chelsea space on Saturday, the quietest day of the week. “People always seem to whisper in your gallery,” artist Jacob Hashimoto told the Chanel-clad dealer. “Because it’s like church,” she replied. Indeed, Hashimoto’s suspended installation of 30,000 kite string—and cut paper collages was awesome—and tranquil. Hempel’s film had harder edges, due partly to crisp, noir-lighted cinematography and to a dazzling montage of one thousand downloaded examples of Brutalist architecture all over the world. He expects to keep producing new editions of the film “for the rest of my life,” he said.

Sunday night on the Lower East Side felt like a lifetime, so allover and numerous were the openings. But that afternoon, to give Fashion Week a nod, several art-world personalities (Kim Gordon, K8 Hardy, Felix Burrichter, Casey Spooner) showed up at the west side Standard Hotel to watch models-for-a-day (artists) walk the Alex Da Corte—designed runway with willowy professionals to present springy numbers by the design team Eckhaus Latta. The music was live, the clothing clever, and the choreography tribal.

After that, the solo re-performance of James Lee Byars’s 1965 *The Mile-Long Paper Walk* at the Museum of Modern Art (where else to find pale imitations of onetime events?) felt isolating. Its antipode was in the madhouse of Team Gallery’s receptions for Cory Arcangel (on Wooster Street) and Ryan McGinley on Grand Street, where the walls and ceilings were totally plastered with 750 appealing young, naked, and not necessarily nubile persons posing against color, Holbein-like seamless backdrops.

By dinnertime my feet were blistered and bloody just from keeping pace around the LES. On Eldridge Street, Miguel Abreu proudly hosted a reception for Jean-Luc Moulène at the block-through space he has developed above a parking garage (David Lewis Gallery is another tenant), and the cantankerously droll Peter Fend fended off admirers of his signage at the unmarked Essex Street Gallery. “My mother always told me, ‘Be useful as well as ornamental,’” he said.

Simon Preston, Nicelle Beauchene, and Jack Hanley were all seeing heavy action on Broome Street, as were Joe Sheffel, Joel Mesler’s *Untitled*, Mark Miller, and DCKT Contemporary on Orchard, Lisa Cooley and Laurel Gitlin on Norfolk, while on Clinton, Marianne Boesky launched a third Manhattan space with a show of drawings by Adam Helms. On Houston,

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

Participant was holding down the alternative fort with “Negrothic, A Manifesto, The Aesthetics of M. Lamar,” and on Rivington, Betty Cunningham and On Stellar Rays both opened their doors while dealer Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn fostered a double-header, “Satan Ceramics” on Freeman’s Alley and hot, hot photographs by David Benjamin Sherry on the Bowery, where Simone Subal got on the good foot with short-circuiter Frank Heath.

Unable to go another step, I taxied to Frankies Spuntino in the West Village, where Rohatyn was holding a small-plate, pass-around dinner for Sherry and the ceramics crew (Tom Sachs, Mary Frey, Pat McCarthy, and JJ Peet) all sporting Sachs’s SATAN’S CERAMICS T-shirt—hands-down, the best of the week.

“It’s perfect under a tuxedo jacket,” Rohatyn advised. Got it. Ornamental and useful! So goes Fashion Week in art.