

# REPORT FROM NEW YORK

## Down East

*Manhattan's Lower East Side has become a mecca for independent, highly innovative new galleries.*

BY STEPHEN MAINE

Given its perhaps unprecedented concentration of galleries, Chelsea has become such a magnet for gallerygoers intent on seeing as much art per hour as humanly possible that it is easy to overlook exhibition venues elsewhere in the city. SoHo, until a few years ago the center of the downtown scene, still hosts a number of galleries old and new; the Williamsburg area of Brooklyn continues to reinvent its feisty self in the face of morphing socioeconomic realities; 57th Street and Madison Avenue maintain their luster, led by a handful of flagship showrooms.

The Lower East Side—roughly, the area of Manhattan bounded to the north by Houston Street, to the west by the Bowery, to the south by Canal Street, and to the east by the East River—has emerged as a fecund, if not cohesive, district in its own right. In marked contrast to the Williamsburg scene, now home to over 40 galleries and, well into its second decade, with a still-fierce sense of community among artists and dealers, the Lower East Side seems populated more by strongly individualistic curator/dealers who, having rejected the Chelsea option (usually on the grounds that it is expensive, overpopulated by galleries, and overrun by trophy-seekers), were nevertheless intent on finding space in Manhattan.

### The Pre-History

While the new wave of galleries began less than five years ago, two venerable, community-based nonprofits of considerably older vintage provide historical perspective. The Henry Street Settlement was established in the late 19th century to provide medical care and other services to the area's burgeoning immigrant population. Arts programming has been a key component from the organization's early years, and today, as

a nonprofit social-services agency, its most visible manifestation is the Abrons Art Center on the eastern end of Grand Street.

Susan Newmark, herself an accomplished artist, oversees the visual art programming at Abrons, including the center's two exhibition areas. The gallery presents five or six shows each season in both galleries, a mix of projects by outside curators and shows developed in-house. The 1970s-era building's eccentricities—including a long, curving glass wall that intrudes on the main exhibition space and renders it far from the “neutral” ideal—present unique challenges to the installation process but have the effect of focusing the viewer's attention on the work and the curatorial concept. Recent shows include “Inner Limits,” curated by Martin Dust and featuring work by Chitra Ganesh and Joelle Jensen, and a solo show by Boston-based photographer Adam Lampton of eerie, apparently found still-lives. Additionally, an annual show highlights alumni of the center's artist-in-residence program, selected by a panel; eight artists a year receive this support. Past artists-in-residence include Shirin Neshat, Willie Birch, Juan Sanchez and Mary Ting.

On New Year's Day of 1980, “The Real Estate Show” opened in a city-owned storefront on Delancey Street, a bit of political theater intended in part to draw attention to the city's complicity in the squandering of housing resources. The coalition of artists behind the show moved to a ragged building on Rivington Street, and

ever since, the alternative nonprofit ABC No Rio has had a distinctly political flavor. In a sign, perhaps, of less confrontational times, No Rio is in the process of buying its building from the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development. The sale is being coordinated by director Steve Englander, who has been involved with the organization intermittently for nearly 20 years; he currently heads all aspects of the program, which, in addition to a gallery, includes a darkroom, printshop and 'zine library.

The gallery presents six to eight exhibitions a year, both projects developed by committee and propos-



*Ei Arakawa: Toward A Standard Risk Architecture, March 9-12, 2006, performance documentation; at Reena Spaulings Fine Art.*

als from outside. “Three Cities Against the Wall,” protesting Israel's controversial “separation wall,” the huge concrete barrier, now about one-third complete, intended to physically separate Palestine from Israel, opened simultaneously last November at No Rio and venues in Tel Aviv and Hebron. For “Coloring Book,” the organization's 25th-anniversary show last summer, local artists executed 4-by-4-foot line drawings on the gallery walls, to which the public was invited to add color. Says Englander, “Part of our mission is to provide a forum for cross-pollination between artists and activists, and we hope that connections made here will lead to future collaborations.”

An erstwhile neighborhood fixture, Esso, was housed from 1996 to 2000 in a loft on Chrystie Street before moving to Chelsea, and was for many years the area's sole outpost for serious art. The gallery has presented widely noticed shows of well-established artists from outside the U.S., such as Carol Rama and Alighiero Boetti, as well as New York area talent.

Kazuko Miyamoto came to the U.S. in 1964 and studied at the Art Students League and the Pratt Graphics Center. She met Sol LeWitt in 1970 and has worked ever since as one of his fabricators, helping to execute the wall drawing seen in “Singular Forms (Sometimes Repeated),” the Guggenheim Museum's

*View of the exhibition “Animal Magnetism,” 2006, curated by Raúl Zamudio; at Cuchifritos. Courtesy Paul Clay, Artists Alliance Inc.*





**The ambitious contrarians behind the neighborhood's diverse venues seem wired for risk-taking, and many are committed to the idea that they can, in some measure, change the culture of the art world.**

2004 exhibition of reductivist art since 1951. In 1986, Miyamoto launched Gallery Onetwentyeight at 128 Rivington Street, which has shown a broad range of work by little-known artists from the U.S., Europe and Asia. A busy exhibition schedule includes nearly a dozen shows a year, three of which are organized by Miyamoto, the rest by outside curators. At her nonprofit venue, she says, she shows a broad range of work: "Anything to refresh me." Echoing, in her characteristically blunt manner, sentiments frequently expressed by nearby dealers on the Lower East Side, she says the concentration of activity is "not a scene, because we don't copy each other."

## 0 Pioneers!

The first wave of new galleries dates from the fall of 2001, when Maccarone Inc. and Canada opened their doors within a month of each other, in the bustling Chinatown area. They were quickly followed by Rivington Arms, and some months later by the nonprofit Participant Inc., both located on Rivington Street.

Maccarone Inc. occupies a low-ceilinged, three-story brick building with fluorescent lights and patchy floors at the eastern end of Canal Street, surrounded by import merchants and electronics stores. Michele Maccarone, director of Luhring Augustine gallery from 1996 to 2000, saw the building as a place where she could effectively present the "anti-white-cube" artists who form the core of her program. Her first show, a rambling, mazelike installation by Swiss artist Christoph Buchel, received great press, and Maccarone Inc. was off and running. Anthony Burden, one of its artists, was selected for this year's Whitney Biennial.

The gregarious Maccarone sees herself as something of an escapee from Chelsea's

"art party train." Of her downtown redoubt, she says, "I feel like you come here and it's 1979 again." As an example, she offers Mike Boucher's *Dirty Room*, a send-up of Walter De Maria's *Earth Room*. The artist's sculptures, resembling faceted, Cubist hot tubs, are familiar to attendees of the Armory Show and Art Basel Miami Beach. In fact, the gallery's installation-based rebuke of art as commodity would seem to be a luxury made possible by Maccarone's success in the explosive marketplace of the art fair. Frustrated by the lack of foot traffic, and a concomitant concern that her favorite shows are not being seen by some "curatorial heavyweights," Maccarone may relocate soon. An installation by Corey McCorkle is planned for the Canal Street space, and fall programming includes shows by the conceptualist sculptor Carol Bove and Viennese Actionist Otto Muehl.

In contrast to Maccarone, from which the street is never far away, Canada is cloistered, at the end of an anonymous corridor in a building on Chrystie Street near Canal. It was started in September 2000 by artist Phil Grauer in the lower level of Leo Koenig's Tribeca space, and augmented by the curatorial skills of fellow artists Sarah Braman and Wallace Whitney. (An alumnus of the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, Grauer cites "the poetry of the open landscape" in his choice of the gallery's name.) Canada moved a year later to the present address at 55 Chrystie, taking advantage of city and state financial incentives extended to small businesses coming to the area in the wake of 9/11.

A strong commitment to abstract painting, conspicuous materials and an artist-oriented curatorial eye distinguish Canada, as well as what Whitney terms an "office-heavy environment" whereby the gallery itself can feel a bit like an anteroom leading



Adam Lampton: *Frozen Bible*, 2005, C-print, 24 by 20 inches; at Abrons Art Center.

to a laid-back think tank. Grauer and Whitney consider "The Two Hanks," their 2003 show of performance, sculpture and video by David Askevold (a meditation on the divergent artistic personalities of country musicians Hank Williams and Hank Snow), a watershed moment for the gallery. A founder of the Nova Scotia School, Askevold is an abstract painter turned maker of mystical videos and performances conflating the banal and the transcendental, "the perfect candidate to spin this group of young abstract painters through."

Several artists associated with dealer Kenny Schachter drifted into Canada's orbit when Schachter left New York, including Brendan Cass and Joe Bradley, both of whom had well-received shows with him. "New York's Finest," curated by Whitney and Cass and mounted early in 2005, represented a coming-together of various strains in the gallery's program. Seen at Canada last fall were the assemblage-based soft sculpture, made of found clothes, linens and stuffed animals, of Michael Mahalchick, and Katherine Bernhardt's impeccably crude faux-expressionist portraits and self-portraits.

Canada has had a lively booth at the last two NADA Fairs in Miami, but a recent episode highlights the uphill battle facing less established galleries. Following his rapid ascent to wide recognition—capped by his inclusion in the 2006 Whitney Biennial—Canada regular Gedi Sibony recently broke with the gallery in favor of higher-profile venues in and near Chelsea, including Harris Lieberman, where he currently is showing with Josh Smith through May 6 [see "New Arrivals" below]. Lacking a certified star in the roster makes it tougher for any gallery to gain admission to the upper echelon of art fairs, *de rigueur* in the current climate. Vicissitudes of the "dark ugly market" do not deter the scrappy Grauer, or dampen his mordant humor. Asked about the gallery's ancient stone floor, which features a shallow but distinct drainage channel, Grauer avers that the space "used to be a kosher slaughterhouse—and still is."

## The Galleries

### ABC No Rio

156 Rivington St.  
212.254.3697  
www.abcnorio.org

### Miguel Abreu Gallery

36 Orchard St.  
212.995.1774  
www.miguelabreugallery.com

### Abrons Art Center

Henry Street Settlement  
466 Grand St.  
212.598.0400  
www.henrystreet.org

### Jen Bekman

6 Spring St.  
212.219.0166  
www.jenbekman.com

### Canada

55 Chrystie St.  
212.925.4631  
www.canadanewyork.com

### Cuchifritos Gallery

Essex Market  
120 Essex St.  
212.420.9202  
www.artistsai.org/cuchifritos/index.html

### Gallery Onetwentyeight

128 Rivington St.  
212.674.0244  
www.galleryonetwentyeight.org

### Maccarone Inc.

45 Canal St.  
212.431.4977  
www.maccarone.net

### Orchard

47 Orchard St.  
212.219.1061  
www.orchard47.org

### Participant Inc.

95 Rivington St.  
212.254.4334  
www.participantinc.org

### The Phatory

618 E. 9th St.  
212.777.7922  
www.thephatory.com

### P.S. 122 Gallery

150 First Ave.  
212.228.4249  
http://ps122gallery.org

### Rivington Arms

102 Rivington St.  
646.654.3213  
www.rivingtonarms.com

### Rostaing/Steinitz Gallery

5 Rivington St.  
212.228.1651

### Silo

1 Freeman Alley  
212.505.9156  
www.silonyc.com

### Reena Spaulings Fine Art

371 Grand St.  
212.477.5006  
www.reenaspaulings.com

### Thrust Projects

114 Bowery #301  
212.431.4802  
www.thrustprojects.com

### Tribes Gallery

285 E. 3rd St.  
212.674.3778  
www.tribes.org



On windswept Delancey Street, an endless stream of traffic forms something of a demarcation between the two lobes of the district. Steps from the Delancey Street stop on the F train, tucked into a corner of the gritty Essex Street Market, is Cuchifritos, a modest but feisty venue that is emblematic of the frisson of high art and grinding commerce that typifies the neighborhood. A program of the nonprofit Artists Alliance, Inc., which also oversees the Clemente Soto Veles studio building on Norfolk Street, Cuchifritos receives support from the Market in the form of reduced rent. The space dates from 2001 and serves an important function as a testing ground for emerging curators. Selection is overseen by AAI's Paul Clay; preference is given to projects that in some manner address issues of interest to the community. Curators Anne Ellegood, Dean Daderko and Raúl Zamudio are among the space's alumni.

## Staking Out a Hot Spot

North of Delancey, there is much anticipation among galleries of what lies in store for the neighborhood after the opening of the New Museum of Contemporary Art's new building on the Bowery at Prince Street, scheduled for fall 2007. That institution plans a ground-floor project space, open to the public free of charge, a gesture to the community designed partly to compensate for the gentrifying effect of the museum's presence. Given the transformation of the area's formerly seedy Clinton Street into a fashionable restaurant row, it is not impossible that the Bowery, long synonymous with homeless alcoholics, might become a thriving art-bound avenue in its own right, augmenting the adventurous small galleries along Rivington Street.

Melissa Bent and Mirabelle Marden met while studying art history at Sarah Lawrence College. The two formed Rivington Arms and opened the gallery's doors in January

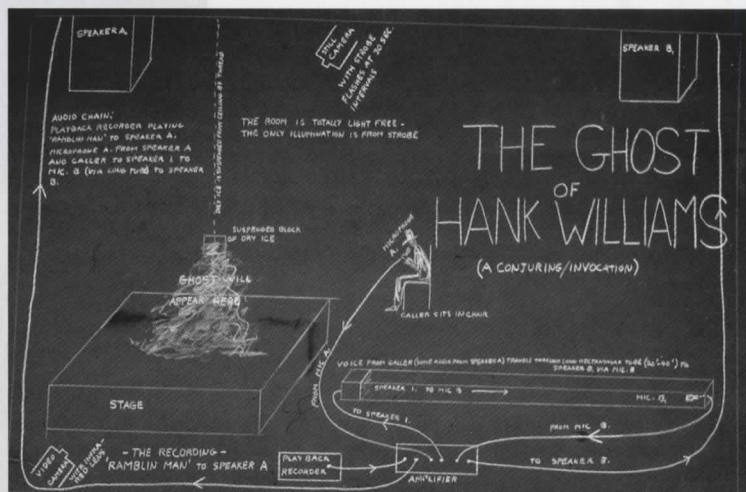
2002. They claim to have no prescribed program, simply showing work they respond to by artists whose commitment they respect. But the duo enjoy being remote from Chelsea, believing that distance from the commercial center allows them to show exciting new work by artists who have not "been tried out." Among the young artists achieving notice with their impressive shows are Carter Mull, who last year showed his crisp, scale-shifting photographs, bordering on abstraction, of broken glass, dirt and pretty debris, and Pinar Yolacan, who, for the portraits of mature women in "Perishables," constructed outfits for her subjects made partially or wholly of tripe.

Marden is the daughter of artists Brice and Helen Marden, and Bent allows that the connection has opened doors. The gallery gains entry to major fairs, and two artists it works with, photographers Hanna Liden and Dash Snow, appear in the 2006 Whitney Biennial.

After four years on Rivington Street, the gallery mounted its final show there, a roundup of regulars called "Goodbye To All That," before moving in April to a new location on East 2nd Street, where it will open with a show by Liden. Though only slightly closer to the future New Museum than the Rivington Street space, the new gallery, just off the Bowery, is better situated, Bent and Marden believe.

Diagonally across the street and a half-block west of Rivington Arms is Participant Inc. The visitor enters a street-level landing; eight steps up lead to the exhibition space, eight steps down to the offices and sometime production facility. Participant distinguishes itself from other area galleries by collaborating in the production of the works it shows, which are often media-based and utilize the unusual configuration. For an early exhibition, filmmaker Charles Atlas shot "video portraits" in the lower level, which were screened simultaneously in the gallery above. On view last January was *The Triumph of Night*, a film by John Brattin, which was produced over the holiday break in the gallery itself. Viewers thus watched the 20-minute film on its own set, among the props. The gallery was the site of an operatic performance by Ron Athey and Juliana Snapper during last winter's Performa 05 festival [see *A&A*, Feb. '06].

Participant's founding director, Lia Gangitano, began interning at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art in 1987 while working toward her English degree at



David Askevold: *The Ghost of Hank Williams*, 1979-80, white chalk on black posterboard, 29 1/2 by 37 1/2 inches. Courtesy Canada.



Carter Mull: *Equilibrium (Composted States)*, 2005, C-print, 23 1/2 by 35 inches. Courtesy Rivington Arms.

View of Anthony Burdin's installation *Piss Bottle Reserve*, 2005, in the basement at Maccarone Inc.



Boston College and painting on her own. She was at the ICA for 10 years, eventually becoming associate curator and organizing "The Boston School," a roundup of area photographers including Nan Goldin, Jack Pierson and Philip-Lorca diCorcia. It was not a hard choice to discontinue her own art-making, as a summer at Skowhegan clarified for her that "I was more interested in other people's art than my own." Tim Nye brought her in as curator at Thread Waxing Space in 1997, where she remained until that SoHo venue closed in 2000. A search for a space of her own ensued, and Participant opened its doors in November 2002.

The shifting status of alternative/underground art and exhibition spaces is the subject of Gangitano's essay, "Dead Flowers: Oppositional Culture and Abandonment," which appears in the current Whitney Biennial catalogue. She is editing *The Alternative to What? Thread Waxing Space and the '90s*, a collection of essays and artists' projects reflecting on the history of that venue and that decade.

"Hey Hot Shot" is the name of the quarterly, four-day-long exhibition of 10 emerging photographers that Jen Bekman mounts in her diminutive storefront gallery on



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Jane Kim of Thrust  
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Spring Street just west of the Bowery. The shows allow Bekman a highly structured way to make contact with new artists, a favorite aspect of her work. The currently popular "poetic snapshot" esthetic is well represented among the photographers she works with, including Tema Stauffer, Dana Miller and Eliot Shepard.

Bekman, a former Internet executive with little background in art, opened the gallery in March 2003 with an emphasis on photography and an eye on the future New Museum location. Eschewing intellectual obscurities, she takes an unencumbered, "populist" approach to marketing her artists: in many ways, her gallery resembles the tidy, unintimidating boutiques dotting the Nolita neighborhood to the west.

Except for the nascent Rostaing/Steinitz Gallery, which, beginning with works by Elaine de Kooning from 1939 to 1987, is entering the secondary market in the space formerly occupied by Bond Gallery, now defunct, Silo is the gallery physically nearest the site of the New Museum. Tia Shin set up Silo in a quirky space on a quirky byway: tiny Freeman Alley, off Rivington just east of the Bowery. The gallery's curving walls, movable partitions and dramatic lighting convey a sense of theater.

An artist trained at the Rhode Island School of



*Elaine de Kooning: Untitled, 1965, gouache on paper, 17 by 14 1/2 inches. Courtesy Rostaing/Steinitz Gallery.*



*Above, view of John Brattin's exhibition "The Triumph of Night," 2006; at Participant Inc. Photo John Berens. Right, production still from The Triumph of Night, 2006, Super-8 film on DVD, 21 minutes. Photo Alex Antitch.*

Design and a veteran of the back office at the Public Art Fund and Metro Pictures, Shin opened Silo in July 2004. She operates in a conventional mode, presenting one- or two-person shows and the occasional group exhibition, but she detects in her own program a trend toward more conceptual, less object-oriented work. The first show of the 2005-06 season was photos by Jacob Burkhardt of rehearsals of Robert Wilson productions. Beginning a second rotation through its stable of artists, Silo recently presented a return engagement of Douglas Boatwright, an elliptical, multimedia installation involving vague, dreamlike projected imagery of a domestic interior and street scenes. Last summer, a group outing titled "There are no more Allan Kaprows in the art world" was something of an homage to the instigator of Happenings. "Hibernation," a group show last winter, addressed the paradox of presenting unfinished or in-progress work, capturing a sense of imminence more typical of the studio than the gallery.

## New Arrivals

Four other serious new galleries address the market in their own ways. Levels of contrivance shroud Reena Spaulings, housed in a former dress shop in a mini-mall on Grand Street. The famously pseudonymous gallery was started early in 2004 by writer John Kelsey and artist Emily Sundblad, who also exhibit together under the moniker Reena Spaulings; the "artist" coordinates various projects involving a shifting roster of collaborators. Similarly up for grabs is the identity of the gallery. "We encourage artists to expand and mutate what the definition and function is of the commercial gallery today," says "Reena."

Josh Smith, whose work is paired with Gedi Sibony's at Harris Lieberman, showed abstract canvases at Reena Spaulings last spring that had been mostly painted over—except for a few inches around their margins—with glossy fields of dark gray. The paintings were supported on painted wooden stools; visual obstruction of the visitor's access to the work had a physical counterpart in the dozens of stools filling the

gallery. Also on hand were a number of "palette paintings," referring to a commonplace among a certain rueful breed of painter; that the unconscious, aimless mark-making which results from mixing colors achieves an offhand elegance truer than the deliberately casual effect for which so many artists strive. Jutta Koether's survey of paintings since 1990, "I Is Had Gone," seen last spring at Chelsea's Thomas Erben Gallery, brought New Yorkers up to date with one aspect of the Cologne-born artist/musician/writer's multifaceted production; Koether is now with Spaulings and is showing in this year's Whitney Biennial.

The gallery publishes videos, CDs and other artifacts as limited editions. The performative aspect of installation often comes to the fore, as in a recent four-day-long performance by Ei Arakawa through which the space was "renovated." While the lease is up this coming summer, Kelsey is determined to keep the gallery going in some form. Amid the blaze of attention received by both the gallery and the artist of the same name, Reena Spaulings is "thinking on our feet and reacting to conditions."

Orchard's letterhead declares, "Art Sales and Services, LLC," and the gallery was established, in May 2005 on lower Orchard Street, with considerable skepticism of the market model even while operating within it. Political in outlook and co-operative in structure, it is a for-profit limited liability corporation in which the artist-partners are investors—they make monthly contributions and share in the profits commensurate to their involvement with a given sale. Orchard is "oriented toward developing a platform and means of financial support for positions, works and practices not supported in the art market." Many partners and others associated with it, such as Andrea Fraser, Dan

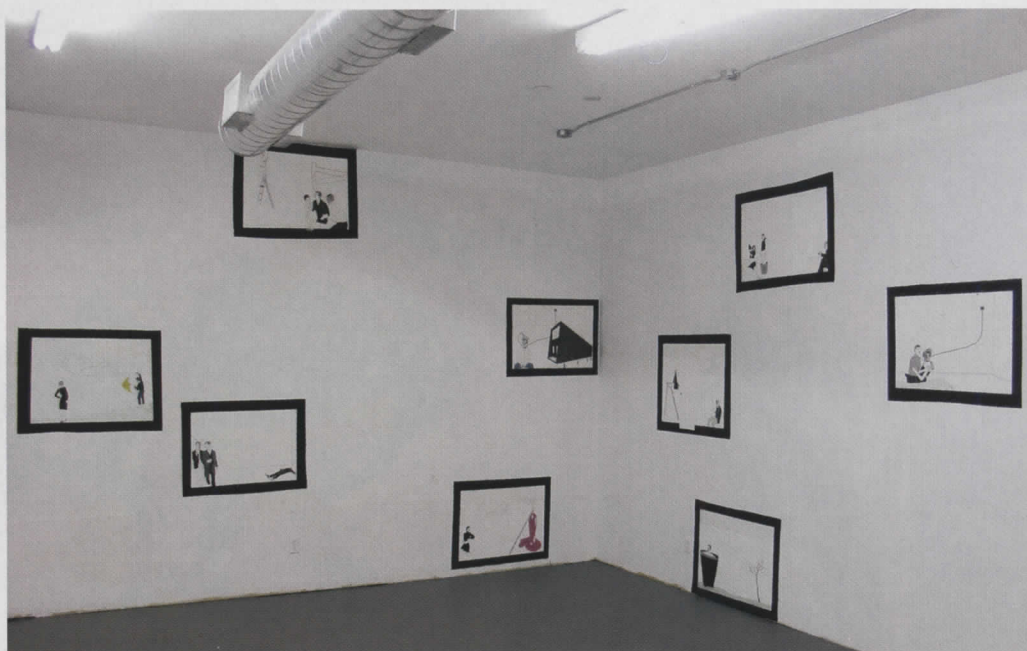


Graham and Michael Asher, are key to the "institutional critique" examining the mechanisms of modern-day art distribution and consumption. Bucking the star system in favor of shows that take on historically resonant themes, group exhibitions curated by members have been the focus.

Orchard's concern with discovering a way to bring difficult works to the market is reflected in the recent "Painters Without Paintings and Paintings Without Painters," which, despite its title, was a relatively ingenuous assembly of works by the likes of Daniel Buren, Lucy McKenzie and co-op member R.H. Quaytman, who all utilize aspects of the vocabulary of painting in an investigation of the "pictorial." The subsequent show, "Having been described in words," curated by writer Bill Horrigan, was rather more rebuslike, hinging on the conceit that Horrigan has written for publication about each of the artists involved, a subtext imperceptible to viewers without the aid of the sheaf of Horrigan's writing made available during the exhibition.

Thrust Projects was launched last October by Dallas native and NYU-trained art historian Jane Kim, following an eight-year apprenticeship at prominent Paris and New York galleries. Kim's primary interest is in Eastern European and Asian artists. Though she follows the classic model of promoting the work of a select few artists, and looked for space in Chelsea until being put off by "power-mongering," the focused, intense Kim insists that

*Lucy McKenzie: Untitled, 2005, charcoal and pastel on wall; in "Painters Without Paintings and Paintings Without Painters" at Orchard.*



*View of Jelena Tomasevic's exhibition "Joy of Life II," 2006; at Thrust Projects. Photo Jane Kim.*

the work she shows is riskier—darker or more confrontational—than what one generally finds elsewhere. Kim plans to focus on installations.

For a recent show, the ironically titled "Joy of Life II," a reprise by the artist Jelena Tomasevic of her installation at the Serbia/Montenegro Pavilion at last summer's Venice Biennale, the windows of the gallery's third-floor space, which ordinarily overlook the Bowery, were covered over, roughly plastered and painted. The resulting claustrophobia was crucial to the installation, which featured stark, stilted drawings, in graphite with occasional touches of silver or bright yellow paint, of slick and sickly men and women engaged in activities ranging from dubiously stealthy to distinctly unhealthy. Addressing a topic hotly debated from various perspectives throughout the neighborhood, Kim echoes the assertion made by Canada's Whitney that foot traffic per se is less important than the motivated visitor who seeks out and spends time with the show.

Taking a historical view of contemporary art is Miguel Abreu, whose gallery opened in March a few steps from the somewhat like-minded Orchard, in a former Buddhist temple tucked between a car service and a lingerie wholesaler. A founding member of Thread Waxing Space, Abreu counts among his signal curatorial statements "Drawing Out of the Void," mounted at Vestry Arts (predecessor to Nyehaus, in Gramercy Park) in 2004. The show limned an alternative tradition within 20th-century art that comes, in his view, out of an examination not of nature, but of desire. Abreu



*Model wearing Elke Lehmann's FOREVER21, 2005, readymade shirt with shopping bag; on view at Silo, May 10-June 11, 2006.*

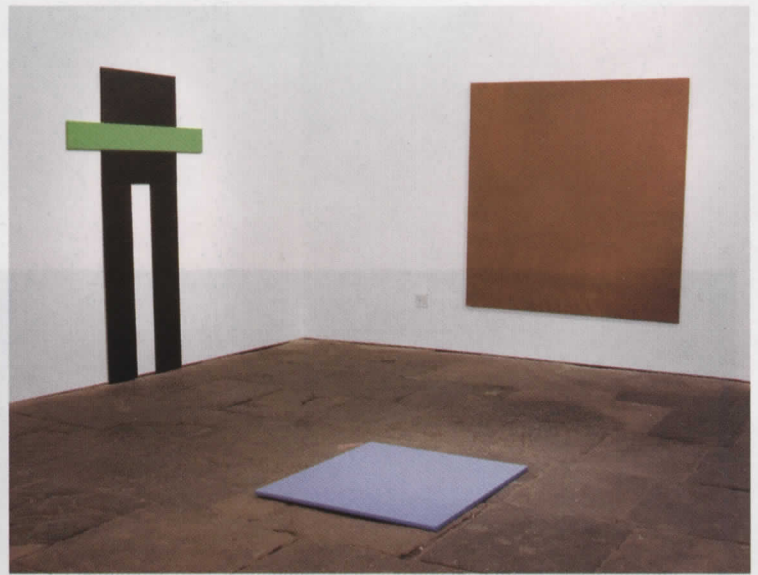
plans a show of Hans Bellmer, whose work he has handled privately for some years.

The Paris native studied filmmaking at CalArts. In describing his vision for his gallery, he uses the metaphor of montage, where a series of images, while distinct one from the next, builds toward a totality. Abreu believes that the market model of value is inadequate for art and that "art needs to find some belief bigger than itself." He avows a sense of community among the artistic crosscurrents of the Lower East Side. His inaugural show placed the work of painter Blake Rayne,

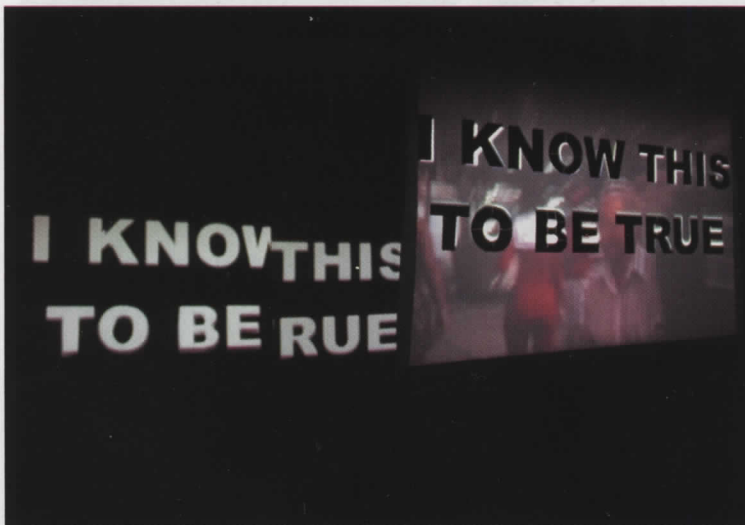




*Corey McCorkle's 2003 photo-mural installation at Maccarone Inc. McCorkle's new installation will be on view at Maccarone this summer.*



*View of Joe Bradley's exhibition "Kurgan Waves," 2006; at Canada. Photo Phil Grauer.*



*Douglas Boatwright: Untitled (I Know This To Be True), 2006, screen with letter cutouts, 8mm film transferred to single-channel DVD, 68 minutes; at Silo.*



*Cheyney Thompson: Table of Hubris, 2002, weasel balls, folding table; in "Painters Without Paintings and Paintings Without Painters" at Orchard.*

*Hanna Liden: Swampwalkers 2, 2006, C-print, 30 by 40 inches. Courtesy Rivington Arms.*



*View of "Threat," a show by the Exhibitionists Women's Art Salon, 2004, with photographs by Nikki Johnson; at Tribes Gallery.*



who showed recently at Reena Spaulings, alongside *Cézanne: Conversations with Joachim Gasquet* and *The Death of Empedocles*, late-'80s works by the experimental filmmakers Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, and a related essay by Dominique Paini. Abreu characterizes the filmmakers' work, little known in the U.S., as "exercises in admiration." One senses that Abreu's approach to his gallery is based on the same principle.



**Hans Bellmer:** *Untitled (The Eyes)*, 1961, pencil and white gouache on tinted paper, 18½ by 19¼ inches.

## Remains of the Day, or New Dawn?

Some 20 years after its heyday as the premier scene providing an alternative to then-growing SoHo, the East Village boasts a handful of noteworthy venues, though it lacks the concentration found south of Houston Street. The non-profit P.S. 122, at 10th Street and First Avenue, has been a fixture since the late '70s, presenting shows by unaffiliated artists curated by a jury that changes annually. The multidisciplinary, multicultural Tribes Gallery, established in 1993 on East 3rd Street, has a strong literary underpinning by way of founder Steve Cannon's background as a poet, playwright and novelist. A noteworthy recent addition to the neighborhood is The Phatory on East 9th Street, where Sally Lelong presents challenging work in her modest storefront space. Betraying an interest in abstraction, Lelong has shown optically playful wall works made from secondhand carpets by Monique Luchetti, Carolanna Parlato's organic, oozing poured-acrylic canvases, and painted-wood constructions by Cordy Ryman.

While some might envy the institutional stability enjoyed by long-timers Abrons Art Center and ABC No Rio, particularly as real-estate development on the Lower East Side is accelerating, the ambitious contrarians behind the neighborhood's commercial venues seem wired for risk-taking, and many are committed to the



**Blake Rayne:** *Untitled 32 (for Miguel)*, 2006, oil on canvas, 84 by 72 inches. Photos this page courtesy Miguel Abreu Gallery.

idea that they can, in some measure, change the culture of the art world. In the words of Canada's Grauer, "We like the challenge, we like the high of survival." □

Author: *Stephen Maine is an artist and writer based in Brooklyn.*