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GREATER NEW YORK

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MOMA P.S.1

by *faye Hirsch*



Right, view of Leidy Churchman's oil-on-panel paintings and oil-on-clay sculptures, all from 2007 to '09.

NEW YORK "Greater New York," the quinquennial roundup of mainly emerging artists who live and work in the city, is currently in its third edition at P.S.1. The curators-Klaus Biesenbach, Neville Wakefield and Connie Butler-cut the number of participants by over half from the previous two installments, allowing more room for 68 artists and collectives. In addition, the curators announced that the museum's spaces were to be a "productive workshop" in which artists could develop their projects over time, as well as participate in performances, panels and screenings.

While on-site activities may have fostered a sense of community among the participants, the effects have probably been little noticed by visitors who don't attend the exhibition more than once. They might miss, for example, the transformation of Bruce High Quality Foundation's "art pedestal exchange program," an installation of empty white Minimalist-like plinths that was pristine at first but has grown progressively grubbier as the pedestals are swapped with used examples from art schools and elsewhere. Those visitors would have assuredly not seen Franklin Evans creating the room-size work *timecompressionmachine* in the weeks leading up to the May 23 opening, touted as an instance of the laboratorylike atmosphere of the show, though his process seems not so different from the usual preparation required for a labor-intensive installation. (An immersive space of painted and cut-up paper, including articles and other printed matter, with sly allusions to art history and a fractured take on pictorial space, Evans's room is a high point.) Ryan McNamara, who is slated for a final performance on Oct. 15, has

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periodically taken dance lessons within the museum's galleries from experts in various genres, something most viewers will not have seen. (His two-channel video *I Thought It Was You*, 2008, in which he executes, to the Herbie Hancock song, nearly identical spastic movements simultaneously in a disco and on a deserted country road, is on view in the show.)

Though the curators, bless them, do not publically congratulate themselves in this respect, the "Greater New York" roster presents an impressive diversity of gender, race and sexual orientation. It is likely the gayest of such summary exhibitions ever mounted. Yet the identity politics feel less ham-fisted than in days of yore. A piece by Sharon Hayes, *Revolutionary Love: I Am Your Worst Fear, I Am Your Best Fantasy* (2008), is compelling despite its didacticism, with screen projections placed at floor level in a room scattered with balloons. The viewer is placed squarely in the action: a crowd of gay people at the 2008 Republican and Democratic conventions reading, in unison, a text outing an unnamed, archetypal closeted politician.

There are some failures—most spectacularly, the decaying tree covered with concrete dust in the first-floor well by David Brooks, which, in making an environmental point, is neither a particularly interesting object nor a convincing metaphor. I found Emily Roysdon's text wallpaper at the entrance, faintly printed with "Who Am I To Be So Free," inadvertently laughable, and her multichannel video of a live Happening-like dance performance pointless as an installation. I was merely depressed by Leigh Ledare's sexually charged photographs of his mother, and longed for Marilyn Minter's subtler photographic portraits of her own narcissistic mother, an intimate filial homage that never feels sensationalistic.

That said, there is much excellent work. Rashaad Newsome's 2009 video mash-up of hip-hop culture samples Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, as the glitter of bling and sex polishes an old chestnut. Leidy Churchman contributes paintings, tabletop objects and two videos of wrapped people being painted with abstract splotches. The oil-on-panel paintings are especially quirky and fanciful, showing odd men with chin-curtain beards lounging about with dogs and lovers, and, in one instance, engaged in an orgy. Deville Cohen's wall projection *Grayscale (A Video in Three Acts)*, 2009-10, involving a cast of men dressed in high heels and wearing masks or bearing structures à la Laurie Simmons, is a funny, skillfully executed meditation on art-making.

A sinister video (*Mine*, 2009) by Liz Magic Laser shows a robotic arm picking through Laser's battered purse, which looks as if it has been retrieved from the site of a mugging or worse (the actual purse is nearby in a vitrine); and a surreal animation reminiscent of the Quay Brothers, *The Ascent of Man* (2009), by Tommy Hartung, offers a weird take on evolution that at one point involves a white rat climbing out of the primordial slime onto a Barbie doll. Some of these artists will be performing during a heavily programmed October, bringing to a close the laboratory that is "Greater New York."