

The First Offspring of an Art World Marriage

# GREATER EXPECTATIONS

BY JERRY SALTZ

**GREATER NEW YORK**  
P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center  
22-26 Jackson Avenue  
Long Island City  
Through May 16

"Greater New York," the freewheeling behemoth that fills every nook and cranny of P.S. 1, has no theme, statement, or position. It's not about art stars, new movements, globalism, or nomadism.

It's about group energy, celebration, consumption, and unformed art waiting to happen. It's about how, in spite of the tremendous obstacles artists face living in New York, they continue to come here in great numbers. If you can't find artists to like in this show, you might consider getting out of contemporary art.

"Greater New York" is like a lesser Woody Allen movie: It's loaded with particulars, light on its feet, but short on overall heft. The aim is to showcase "artists who have become prominent in the last five years," yet the exhibition ranges from artists still in art school to those who have been exhibiting for almost two decades, and from artists who have had museum shows to those with no shows. I wish they had simply given 20 known artists and 20 unknowns a room of their own; maybe then "Greater New York" would have been great. By my count, at least 80 of the 146 already have gallery representation, and seven of those show with Andrew Kreps. Admirably, however, the exhibition demonstrates how many art worlds there are in New York, and proves you can do a multimedia, multicultural, and multinational show without leaving town.

This is the first collaboration between MOMA and P.S. 1 since their merger last year, and judging by appearances, they're feeling pretty frisky about being together (P.S. 1 even calls itself "P.S. 1—a MOMA affiliate"). The heads of both institutions, Glenn Lowry and Alanna Heiss, were greeting people at the opening, a euphoric event that not surprisingly had people lined up around the block.

So, how did the tag team of more than 30 curators pull together this flawed but lively group of artists in less than six months, on a budget of only \$280,000? The selection process seems to have been unusually democratic. An open call for slides went out, followed by another. There were marathon slide sessions, during which more than 2000 artists were screened. (I accidentally walked into one last November that was taking place in a room behind the usual buffet during a press preview for "Modern Starts." Oops.) Later, the curators phoned art world professionals for suggestions (me included, but I declined to make any). The last artist was invited two days before the opening. More remarkable were tales of artists being visited by two MOMA heavyweights, Lowry and Kirk Varnedoe, at once. Yikes!

Generalizations? Intentionally or not, "Greater New York" is a response to last summer's Venice Biennale and what Peter Schjeldahl perceptively called "festivalism"—the international style of giant installations. Much of the work is portable, thoughtful but not ponderous, and refrains from theatricality.



DO-HO SUH'S *SEOUL HOME/L.A. HOME* (1999) AND, AT REAR, MICHELLE LOPEZ'S *BOY* (1999) AT P.S. 1

Medium-wise, painting dominates, accounting for more than a quarter of the show. In addition to being well installed, the work is well behaved, and there's little that qualifies as sensational, especially in the British sense of the word: There are no dead animals, no female sanitary products, and very little sex.

But there's a lot that's good. A gallery with Lisa Ruyter, Lucky DeBellevue, David Dupuis, and Jeff Gauntt is a testament to the power of color. Ruyter, who has been showing for 10 years, may be our Gary Hume. Her painting of a youngster and a person dressed as Death is a study in design and dementia, and all but hyperventilates color. Newcomer Gauntt includes a diptych that mixes an L.A.-like penchant for architectural graphics with something profoundly bulbous, while DeBellevue's pipe-cleaner corner piece is a wedge of synthetic hue.

This may be a low-budget exhibition, but a couple of high-production numbers stand out. Paul Pfeiffer's mesmerizing video, assembled from over 5000 digitalized images of a basketball as it pulsates but never moves, is like a cathode-ray lava lamp; I couldn't take my eyes off this fabulously weird thing. Then there's Julian LaVerdiere's two-story Albert Speer-like monument, *First Attempted Trans-Atlantic*

*Telegraph Cable Crossing*. Entombed within a smoky Plexiglas cylinder is a giant model of a sunken ship, accompanied by a droning technogoth soundtrack. A control freak of the first magnitude, LaVerdiere gets the going-for-it prize. The low-production/high-impact award goes to Rachel Feinstein for her ludicrously delightful, Cocteau-like video foray into fairy tale. Tolland Grinnell, meanwhile, redeems himself of recent sculptural sins with a folding table that tucks neatly into a suitcase.

Outside in the courtyard are two quietly provocative works. The first, a working sauna by Pia Lindman, owes something to Rikrit Tiravanija (as does Mi Young Sohn's pleasing installation of bottled water on the third floor). If you're not afraid of getting naked in public, while you're sitting on Lindman's outdoor bench, cooling down, look up and see Piotr Uklanski's suspended ball, which glows like a beneficent August moon at night.

Refreshed and blessed, put your clothes on and go back inside to the reception area and bliss out over the exquisite desktop diorama, complete with rocks and fake water, made by Clara Williams, a sculpture student from Yale. If I could find a place for my computer on this desk, shrewdly titled *Very Gentle Protest*, I'd

be happy for years. Next door is a riotous painting by Erik Parker, a hip-hop hit list of art world movers and shakers, with names scrawled in sausage-like thought balloons. Parker gets Philip Guston, Rob Storr, Def Jam, and Rick Prol to relate to one another.

Parker's painting signals a nice subleque of mad diagrammers. Mark Lombardi, at 48 the oldest artist in the show (the youngest is 23), likes to track the monetary machinations of shady characters. Here he includes the research and preparatory sketches used to make the large diagram on view that has something to do with a bank scandal (see George Bush and Saddam Hussein do business). Terence Gower's idea of shadiness hits closer to home. Cutting up art reviews (mine included), he graphs the emotional ups and downs he imagines the artist subject might have. Elsewhere, you can see the initial stages of Dylan Stone's magical-impossible project: to photograph every building in Manhattan; or the raw, hysterical drawings that track Elizabeth Campbell's wild imagination. Beginning with her December 6 P.S. 1 studio visit, thought lines split into scores of branches; one leads to "recognition," another to broken marriage, bad body image, and an inability to reach orgasm. Talk about racing thoughts.

I imagine Campbell taking a moment in the empty room that plays host to Stephen Vitiello's sibilant sound piece, looking out the window at Manhattan, and drifting away; or sitting in front of Jeremy Blake's hypnotic changing video/painting with soundtrack, down in the basement. She might even be thankful for Ricci Albenda's sexy Dr. Caligari installation in the boiler room.

Upstairs, Ellen Gallagher makes unexpected connections between race and formalism in an untitled shiny black canvas that could be called *The Sidelong Glance*, because the only way you can see the silhouette on its surface is by standing to one side. From here, if you look up you will see one of the show's better moments: Do-Ho Suh's marvelous life-size house, a ghost of his childhood home in Korea, sewn in translucent, iridescent celadon silk.

Many other artists deserve mention. Shahzia Sikander's small Indian-style temperas, more formally and psychologically wrought than ever; Jimbo Blachly's wooden-block doorway installation, one of the few messy-ish pieces; Karen Yasinsky's crude, stop-action animation of skullduggery; Roxy Paine's meticulous, artificial mushroom field; Jesse Bransford's gigantic wall drawing of paranoid America; Sermin Kardestuncer's stitched floor; Francis Cape's carpenter interventions; Julie Mehretu's sensually autistic map painting; Javier Tellez's birdhouse as insane asylum; Adriana Arenas's wacky, cotton-candy karaoke video; and Jennifer Bornstein's mini-mini-cineplex.

Regardless of this show's shortcomings, it is probably a looser, bigger, more representative look at current New York art than MOMA on its own would allow, and it's definitely a brighter, tighter, less polemical show than P.S. 1, left to its own devices, could have managed. Whatever else you think about it, "Greater New York" bodes well for their experimental marriage. **B**