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THE GOOD LIFE

ART

New York's New Works

BY SAMEER REDDY



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST—FORDPROJECT (2)

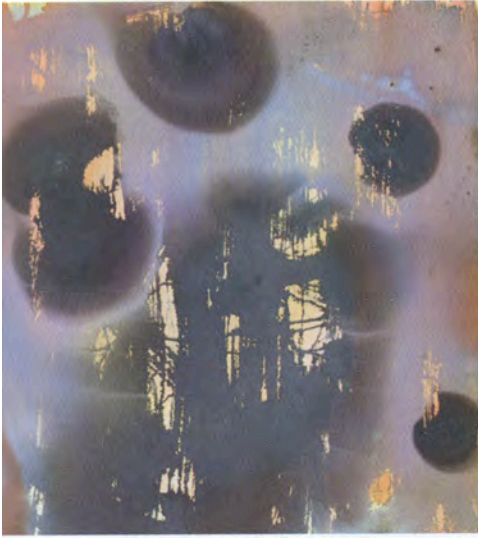
THE FINANCIAL CRISIS MAY HAVE been the best thing to have happened to New York's art scene since Andy Warhol. At its peak in 2007, the market was certainly ripe for a takedown: too many galleries selling subpar work at inflated prices, centered in one neighborhood—Chelsea—where prohibitive rents allowed only the most commercially successful to survive. Now, in yet another sign that the financial meltdown may finally be behind us, several significant new gallery spaces have

begun to open their doors in Manhattan. And with the freedom that comes from reinventing the system, they are pursuing unconventional curatorial programs and, in some cases, setting up shop in unexpected places.

In SoHo, Kathy Grayson and Meghan Coleman, veterans of the venerable Deitch Projects gallery, struck out on their own last summer after Jeffrey Deitch shuttered his space to become the director of Los Angeles's Museum of Contemporary Art. Cheekily named The

Ready for viewing at
FordProject.





Women's work on display at the Asya Geisberg Gallery.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF ASYA GEISBERG GALLERY, COURTESY OF TEL AVIV MUSEUM OF ART, COURTESY OF THE HOLE

Hole, their new venture overcame dead-beat investors and elusive space before opening last June in a low-ceilinged space near Louis Vuitton. Their first show demonstrated their flexible, unconventional spirit: with opening day around the corner, most artists had not completed the work they planned to show. Instead of having a meltdown, Grayson and Coleman simply recast the show to be about the creative process, exhibiting only incomplete works. Titled “Not Quite

Open for Business,” the show reflected their general attitude, which approaches the whole project as a perpetual work in progress. The pair plan to remain in the space for a year before trading up to a larger, more permanent home, at which point they will unveil the roster of artists they represent.

In the meantime, they’ve put their social network to good use, exhibiting work by Kenny Scharf, the downtown collective Dearraindrop, and Mat Brinkman. “The

old gallery model is a real dinosaur,” says Grayson. “We’re trying to break down some of the boundaries that gallery representation creates. We have stuff for sale online, a store in the back [of the gallery]. The model where you represent 10 people and everyone has a show every two years, it’s boring and stagnant for the artists.” Their latest show, which stretches into mid-January, puts their iconoclastic philosophy into practice: they are selling 200 posters in limited editions by 150 different

NEW YORK GALLERY-HOPPING

The Old Guard

When the works they had commissioned weren't ready for their new gallery's inaugural show, Grayson and Coleman simply recast the exhibit to feature works in progress, cheekily calling it 'Not Quite Open for Business.'

artists, including Yoko Ono, Jack Pierson, and Shepard Fairey. At only \$75 a pop, the works are meant to enable the gallery's younger, less affluent fans to participate as collectors, not just as spectators.

Opening uptown at 57 West 57th Street this month is the *fordProject*, a subsidiary of the Ford modeling agency. But the new gallery has nothing to do with fashion; it's an independent extension of the Ford brand into a new cultural space, cultivating a for-profit model by mixing a museum and gallery approach. Charismatic man-about-town Tim Goossens, who helped stage a number of major exhibitions as the assistant curator of MoMA PSi, has been named the space's creative director. He plans to commission and exhibit a number of site-specific pieces and installations, in addition to a schedule of high-impact group shows that bring together big names, like Paul McCarthy, with emerging artists. The *fordProject*'s midtown address is unusual for a contemporary art space. Located in a two-story penthouse, the gallery will forgo foot traffic, but Goossens remains confident about its prospects. "We're

Larry Gagosian

MULTIPLE LOCATIONS



Marian Goodman

24 WEST 57TH STREET



David Zwirner

525 WEST 19TH STREET



Barbara Gladstone

TWO CHELSEA LOCATIONS



going to make it a destination by displaying unique and site-specific pieces," he says. "At the end of the day, we have to turn a profit to survive, but [the owners] understand that it cannot only be about that. If you engage with the right artists and give them the opportunity to make good work, it will find its way to the right collectors and institutions."

Even Chelsea is seeing a surge of new energy. The downturn has resulted in more vacancies and lower rents, permitting ventures that might not have been financially viable a few years ago. The shift encouraged Asya Geisberg to open her own eponymous ground-floor gallery on West 23rd Street, in a space formerly occupied by Goff + Rosenthal. Four of the five artists on Geisberg's evolving roster happen to be women, and she's conscious of the role she can fulfill in creating a more level playing field. "It's not something that I consider an overt mission, but I'm very happy that by definition there are more women artists out there that people can see and buy," she says. "[Women's artwork] doesn't need to be more interesting than [men's], but why shouldn't it be valued as much? I'd like to do whatever I can to eliminate any kind of bias that might be latent, but still exists." Geisberg is also trying to inaugurate a series of artist talks—the kind of opportunity typically available only to insiders who arrange for a studio visit.

Whether or not these new ventures endure, it's clear that the collapse of the art-market bubble has winnowed the ranks of gallerists to those who are the most committed, capable, and innovative. If they're able to succeed, it's an encouraging sign—not only for other sectors of the American economy, but also for artists and their patrons everywhere who perhaps never stopped believing in the promise of an empty canvas. □