

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Some Shows for Escape, Some for Introspection

When the dog days arrive, many New York art galleries put their solo acts on ice and turn their exhibition spaces into pluralistic laboratories to test new talent and experiment with cool ideas. If you can stand the heat, it is a great time to be out looking at contemporary art.

ART REVIEW

KEN JOHNSON

An unscientific and incomplete survey of group shows already open — more openings will follow after the holiday weekend — finds a retiring, introspective mood. It looks as if the art world had gone into retreat from the endless barrage of bad news coming from the world at large.

The one politically motivated exhibition, at Zwirner & Wirth, is tellingly called “Quiet Politics.” Elsewhere, titles like “I Won’t Grow Up” (at Cheim & Read) and “Deep Comedy” (Marian Goodman) suggest escapist urges. Shows with enigmatic titles like “Not So Subtle Subtitle” (Casey Kaplan) and “Crop Rotation” (Marianne Boesky) reflect the obscurely personal tastes of their curators. “Retrospective” (Gagosian) takes an art historical turn, and “The Stranger” (Yvon Lambert) finds its inspiration in the nihilistic novel by Albert Camus.

ZWIRNER & WIRTH More elegant than inflammatory, “Quiet Poli-

An Art Lover’s Summer Guide

ADAM BAUMGOLD “Road Works,” through Aug. 15 at 74 East 79th Street, Manhattan, (212) 861-7338, adambaumgoldgallery.com.

MARIANNE BOESKY “Crop Rotation,” through Aug. 15 at 509 West 24th Street, Chelsea, (212) 680-9889, marianneboeskygallery.com.

CHEIM & READ “I Won’t Grow Up,” through Aug. 29 at 547 West 25th Street, Chelsea, (212) 242-7727, cheimread.com.

GAGOSIAN GALLERY “Retrospective,” through Aug. 22 at 522 West 21st Street, Chelsea, (212) 741-1717, gagosian.com.

MARIAN GOODMAN “Deep Comedy,” through July 30 at 24 West 57th Street, Manhattan, (212) 977-7160, mariangoodman.com.

CASEY KAPLAN “Not So Subtle Subtitle,” through July 31 at 525 West 21st Street, Chelsea, (212) 645-7335, caseykaplangallery.com.

YVON LAMBERT “The Stranger,” through July 31 at 550 West 21st Street, Chelsea, (212) 242-3611, yvon-lambert.com.

ZWIRNER & WIRTH “Quiet Politics,” through Aug. 29 at 32 East 69th Street, Manhattan, (212) 517-8677, zwirnerandwirth.com.

tics” presents works expressing political impulses in understated ways. “Untitled Fear” by Felix Gonzalez-Torres is an inscrutable Minimalist box made of blue-tinted mirrors. David Hammons’s sumptuous rendition of the African-American flag — the United States flag but in black, red and green — is as laconic as it is suggestive. Among other possibilities, it might be a slyly subversive rejoinder to Jasper Johns’s flag paintings.

Walid Raad’s fictitious video showing sunsets supposedly re-

corded by a Lebanese surveillance-camera operator has an affecting, elegiac feeling, and Michael Brown’s stainless-steel simulation of a cracked mirror freezes an act of anarchic rage into a lovely, spidery web.

CHEIM & READ Organized by the collector Beth Rudin DeWoody and the artist Donald Baechler, “I Won’t Grow Up” presents almost 60 pieces that look as if they were made by or for children, created by more than 30 artists. Why so many artists these days — including, here, Jeff Koons, Louise Bourgeois, Takashi Murakami, Jake and Dinos Chapman and Mike Kelley — should be so preoccupied by child-likeness remains unexplained, but it is an entertaining show.

Mark Fox’s video “Nutzilla,” in which a giant Mr. Peanut violently attacks the Cincinnati Art Museum, is hilarious. George Stoll’s hand-made, child-size costumes, one a skeleton and the other a clown, are delicately evocative. And Tim Liddy’s painted simulation of an old Twister game box is an extraordinary feat of trompe l’oeil realism.

MARIAN GOODMAN “Deep Comedy,” which was organized by the artist Dan Graham and the curator Sylvia Chivatanond, does not quite live up to its title’s promise. “Sophisticated Wit” would be more accurate for this exhibition, which includes works by John Baldessari, Fischli & Weiss and Rodney Graham. But there are some instances of fairly profound humor.

John Wesley’s cartoon-style painting of Donald Duck giving

birth and Vija Celmins’s painting of a steaming electric frying pan are both mysteriously funny. A video by Michael Smith and Joshua White about a fabricated wellness center is a dead-on spoof of New Age entrepreneurship. Christian Jankowski’s mock-documentary in which nonprofessional child actors play famous artists discussing their works satirizes art-world language and customs to surprisingly touching effect.

(Comedy lovers, by the way, might consider a side trip to the Adam Baumgold Gallery where “Road Works” offers a rich selection of comic drawings, paintings and sculptures about life on the road by more than two dozen artists, including H. C. Westermann, Saul Steinberg and Joseph Yoakum.)

CASEY KAPLAN Matthew Brannon’s selection of mostly small works on paper by 24 other artists has an insiderish feel. It includes Christopher Williams’s photograph of the blank white back of an art book from 1969; collages by John Stezaker in which postcards depicting rocks are pasted over film stills of lovers; small abstractions by Nick Mauss made by scratching through aluminum leaf into a black gesso ground; and two posters for a Wade Guyton exhibition in London illustrated by photographs of a muscular man’s torso.

What holds it all together is an exquisite aliveness to form and materials, and an acute alertness to conventions of style and representation. It is absorbing and often puzzlingly abstruse.

MARIANNE BOESKY Organized by the independent curator Clarissa Dalrymple, “Crop Rotation” is almost as perplexing as Mr. Brannon’s show, but it is more theatrically engaging.

The words “walk” and “talk” printed in yellow on black on a length of plastic stuck to the floor — a piece first made in 1970 by Ferdinand Kriwet — lead to a room where a rickety wooden structure by Marc Bijl holds up three horizontal mirrors reflecting words spray-painted in reverse on the wall. They read, “The construction of life is at present in the power of facts.”

In a corner of the main gallery two enormous black circles painted on each wall by Neil Campbell give the momentarily thrilling illusion of openings into infinite



MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY, NEW YORK
Ferdinand Kriwet’s “Walk Talk,” from the show “Crop Rotation.”

space. But a poetic tableau by Marlo Pascual involving old photographs under glass, a seashell, a large rock, electric lights, an antique telephone and a much enlarged page from Walker Percy’s novel “The Moviegoer” is portentously heavy-handed.

Don’t miss Jeffrey Wells’s video projection of an almost invisible line wavering in one corner of the gallery or Mr. Kriwet’s video montage of television clips from the 1972 presidential race between Richard M. Nixon and George McGovern.

GAGOSIAN At a certain point in their careers some artists become custodians of their own histories. Marcel Duchamp had his works reproduced in miniature and neatly installed in portable boxes. One of them is the centerpiece of “Retrospective,” which presents works that function as compendiums of their maker’s earlier efforts.

Along with pieces on paper by Roy Lichtenstein and Jasper Johns, there’s “Red,” a terrific, mostly gray canvas by Andy Warhol that has images of Mao, Marilyn, a car crash, a tomato soup can, a cow and a big red flower silkscreened on it.

One fascinating room presents written and photographic documentation of all the performances Chris Burden did from 1971 to 1973. Another has all the films and videos that Douglas Gordon has produced since 1992, running in the dark on 50 monitors.

YVON LAMBERT An enigmatic array of seven sculptures by seven artists, “The Stranger” might be a meditation on the absurdity of the human condition. Richard Jackson’s “Big Baby,” a large, yellow smiley face made of shiny plastic with pudgy, humanoid limbs and male genitalia attached, lies on its pedestal like a helpless infant. Berlinde de Bruyckere’s wax torso in an old vitrine looks like the remnant of a medieval sculpture of a tortured saint crossed with a slab of fatty meat.

And “The Long Awaited” by Patricia Piccinini, in which a sleeping boy cradles in his lap the head of a sleeping, grandmotherly mermaid, could be a scene from a new Steven Spielberg fantasy. Meanwhile, in a nod to the show’s title, George Segal’s blue woman at a cafe table reads from a real copy of that tale of existential malaise by Camus.



ANDY WARHOL ESTATE/PRIVATE COLLECTION, GAGOSIAN GALLERY, NEW YORK
“Red,” by Andy Warhol, part of a show at the Gagosian Gallery.