

# Back



## Greater New York 2010

P.S.1. Contemporary Art Center, New York, USA

'Greater New York 2010' presents the work of 68 artists and collectives who have been active in the five boroughs of New York over the last five years. Curated by Klaus Biesenbach, Connie Butler and Neville Wakefield, the exhibition runs the length, breadth, floors, walls, ceilings and cafeteria of the museum. Arriving hard on the heels of the Whitney Biennial and last year's 'Generational: Younger Than Jesus' at the New Museum, its task is to identify paths through the as-yet-unwritten terrain of New York now. Needless to say, we are not in the grip of a paradigm shift. There are familiar trails that flag perennial if not current moods: ethnographic identity politics meet hangover radicalism, painterly post-Minimalism shares the walls with photographic portraiture, and sexuality via the dressing-up box, served with some obligatory *outré* moments – courtesy of an artist who photographs his mother *in flagrante delicto*.

Ryan McNamara  
*Make Ryan a Dancer*  
2010  
Performance  
documentation

Heaven forbid that my tastes have become more refined with age, but, given the sheer volume here, there is less to like than should be expected. It is perhaps best to approach 'Greater New York 2010' like a graduation show, finding succour where you can. If you can separate them from the beaten tracks of curatorial narrative, there are works here that sustain prolonged viewing or, failing that, irk enough to prompt a response.

Many contributions signpost their critical intent. Take, for example, *Laberintos (after octavio paz)* (2003-9), William Cordova's collection of 200 vinyl records 'appropriated' from an undisclosed Ivy League college, which are presented in symbolic 'redress' for the institution's refusal to return Peruvian artefacts. The idea is going somewhere – Jean Genet, after all, made theft literary, political, even satirical – but unfortunately this feels undernourished in wit, presentation and purpose. Besides, wouldn't a Yale frat party – summary research reveals it be Cordova's Alma Mater – benefit from the sounds, words and soul of Otis Redding, Johnny Cash

and Donna Summer? Just return them William, it's OK, no questions will be asked! *Laberintos* shares space with Hank Willis Thomas' painstakingly digitally de-sloganeered advertising posters, 'Unbranded' (2010), which remind us that, yes, we're all targets of incessant capitalism. In short: ad man you're a bad man.

Identity politics take a more curious and engaging turn in Liz Magic Laser's video of a mechanized and remote dissection of her handbag (*Mine*, 2009). It's an intriguing and sinister ballet, guided by unknown hands, in which two robotic claws examine and slice through the bag's contents as red lipgloss splurges and dollar bills are reduced to confetti. *Mine* works where the others don't, in that it allows the mind room to wander, to engage in the complicated matter of the subjective self, eschewing textbook enquiry or teacher/student relations. In the same gallery, Brian O'Connell's (*Not Architecture for the Kunsthalle, P.S.1 2010*) (2010) records its own production, as compacted Miracle-Gro Potting Mix and cement form what at first glance appear to be supporting columns to the gallery. Upon closer inspection the columns fall short of the ceiling. Inverting Robert Smithson's idea of site-specificity, they appear like plinths, claiming the building itself as a found work.

There are many moments in which potential relationships between works are quickly closed down, pieces that repeat or cancel each other out or simply aren't strong enough to compete with the narrative floating in from the adjoining room. Good examples are the vivid psychedelic images of fashion photographer David Benjamin Sherry, diluted both conceptually but, more pertinently, through competing colour, with Amy Yao's vividly painted doors-to-nowhere. The two are read as one. Yao fares better in the adjoining room, where her brightly coloured hairpieces and painted batons (*Anarchist Clowns Protesting at GS, no. 1-10*, 2010) are placed next to Kalup Linzy's camp soap opera, *Melody Set Me Free (the series)* (2010). Shot between 2004 and 2010, Alice O'Malley's black and white portraits of New York underground icons are unremarkable photographs and too easy to dismiss when considered in relation to K8 Hardy's Cindy Sherman-lamprooning self-portraits. Elsewhere, and plumbing a similarly playful approach to Hardy, A.L. Steiner's *Angry, Articulate, Inevitable* (2010), photo-documentation wallpapered from floor to ceiling, depicts queerstick posturing and could be viewed as a riposte to the likes of Terry Richardson as heaps of naked flesh sprawl in presumed satiric awe of an Yves Klein body painting.