

VENUS MANHATTAN

“We Went To The Upper East Side, Vol One.” *Art fag City*, August, 14 2012.

ART=CITY



Installation shot of Bulletin Boards at Venus Over Manhattan.

Bulletin Boards

Venus Over Manhattan July 20 – August 24, 2012 980 Madison Avenue, 3rd Floor

Leighann: Art writer and collector-turned-gallerist Adam Lindemann’s Venus Over Manhattan stands out from its polished Upper East Side neighbours with its bare, skeletal walls and vacant space. The gallery’s second show, Bulletin Boards, organised by White Columns’ Matthew Higgs, was definitely the strongest of the shows we saw. It is exactly what a group show should encompass: twenty emerging and mid-career artists, including Rita Ackermann, Vince Aletti, Darren Bader, Gavin Brown, and Tom Burr, are given a 4-foot-by-3-foot bulletin board to fill/destroy with photographs, postcards, paint, polyfiller, and anti-capitalist slogans. We don’t know why Gavin Brown gets a slightly larger board than everybody else to display a photograph of the inside of his

fridge, but the Bulletin Boards show was the only exhibition we saw that resulted in varied, engaging and interesting responses from all of its participants. Favorite billboard goes to Antione Catala, who used one half of the billboard space for images that allude to Hell, and the other side for postcards and photographs of the letter “O”. Hello! Genius.

Whitney: Could not agree more! This was one of my favorite shows this year, partly because it actually feels presented like an art show, not a showroom. I love the all-visual language of these, which is not surprising, given the fact that many of these artists specialize in it: B Wurtz, Nate Lowman, Mike Cloud, Antoine Catala, most people who show at Gavin Brown.

I loved that “Hell”/”O” board, too, with a bunch of stock photo “O”s on the right surrounding a photo of Oprah with her arms spread. Hearing the crescendo in your head (“oh...oh..oh.OhOH!”) while looking back and forth from the Hell cutouts is hilarious. It also reminded me of “BEES.”

Mike Cloud’s board displays Microsoft Word-processed parables about younger and older artists, ending in lines like “Upon seeing the impossibility of further reply, the artist conceded to the superiority of its admirer and invited it to stay in its home while in town.” I thought that was a really succinct sketch of contemporary art dogma.

While the scraps of notepad paper and stuffed boards may look about as random as “Brand Innovations” from the outset, it’s the opposite; the artworks riff on each other, and each rewards the viewer with some thought.

Corinna: The premise of the show feels like a school project: “Hey, artists! What can you shove inside this bulletin board? Now, go!” I don’t think this is a fantastic show, but it does illustrate how creativity can blossom under the shackles of a few restraints. I liked Virginia Overton’s use of putty to buttress the glass, and I liked Mike Cloud’s tacked-up stories and Antoine Catala’s “Hell-O” board too.

As far as summer group shows go, this one’s one of the better ones I’ve seen this year. In comparison to the other summer show curated by Matthew Higgs this summer for James Cohan, this one looks better. It’s less cluttered and the range of artists makes more sense than the ones at James Cohan, which included everyone from Warhol to Andy Coolquitt.

What I find most interesting is that a show like this seems refreshing. It shouldn't, though, because at its heart, it's just a school project. But the desire for some sort of order in contemporary art, rather than, say, a scattered installation of stuff, means a lot for the direction we want art to take.