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LAST CHANCE

A Gallery Goes Out in a Burst of Energy



Michael Appleton for The New York Times

The Guild & Greyskul Gallery on Wooster Street in SoHo, which will close this month after five years.

By **ROBERTA SMITH**

New York's increasing gallery closings may be cause for distress, especially for artists who suddenly find themselves without dealers. But you might consider these closings not as a loss of energy but as energy transformed, moving from one dimension to another.

Cohan & Leslie, a Chelsea gallery that closed last month, implied as much in its farewell e-mail message: a post-election, pre-[inauguration](#) photograph of [Barack Obama](#), casually dressed in a gray T-shirt and giving a smile and a wave from the back seat of a sleek automobile. Even more to the point is the current four-day show that is the final curtain for the SoHo gallery Guild & Greyskul, which has filled the space to the brim with a whopping 120 artists. This constitutes going out with a very big bang.

The show's title, "On From Here," is a rallying cry, an optimistic and open-ended rearrangement of the title of the gallery's opening show five years ago ("From Here On"). The art on view is a crowded array of mediums, styles and worldviews. Almost all of the possibilities seem to be covered, from full-on paintings like Benjamin Degen's "Yellow Room" to austere film projections like Amy Granat's haunting "Spraypaint Film."

At the opening on Thursday, the tally of artworks was exceeded only by the number of people attending. Sculptures at the center of the room were occasionally at risk but escaped damage. Circulation at the doorway approached subway rush-hour conditions. On the sidewalk outside the overflow crowd smoked, talked and watched the artist Dennis Palazzolo, dressed as an octopus, perform in the window.

Anya Kielar is one of three artists who founded the gallery, along with Johannes VanDerBeek and his sister, Sara VanDerBeek. Last month she said their main goal had been to break even. "We've always put what we earned from sales toward the artists, the exhibitions, without getting into debt," she said.

But a few months ago the three realized that the art market slowdown had brought them to the brink. They decided to quit while still a bit ahead. She added that because they are, first and foremost, artists, the gallery's life had always been finite. "We knew it would end," she said. "We just didn't know when."

At Thursday's opening Mr. VanDerBeek said they had put together the show in about three weeks, which is hard to believe, considering that it is unusually free of duds. There are impressive works by artists whose names are nearly or completely unfamiliar, several of whom worked at Guild & Greyshkul as assistants or interns.

These include John Bianchi, who works in glazed plaster; Rebecca Shiffman, who contributes a rather nice portrait of Mr. VanDerBeek; the promising abstract painter Jonathan Roth; and the sculptor David Kennedy-Cutler, who has fashioned something quite mysterious out of plexiglass, shattered CDs and a torn-up photograph of an oil slick.

Better-known young artists like Ryan Johnson, Nicole Cherubini, Lansing-Dreiden and especially Chie Fueki signal interesting new directions with their inclusions. In one especially lively corner are paintings by Alison Fox, Dana Schutz, Patricia Treib and the veteran artist Marilyn Minter, whom Mr. VanDerBeek said they invited simply because "she signed the book at just about every show."

Lucas DeGiulio, who was all but lost in the last [Whitney Biennial](#), contributes a visionary little piece fashioned from the twigs of a dead plant that is still in its flowerpot. Its tiny spirals are enlarged upon by a site-specific sculpture by David Brooks in the gallery's former office, now cleared out. Made of old floor joints and bits of foam core, it is braced between the floor, ceiling and one wall, with very little but pressure holding it together.

In the nethermost corner of this space, don't miss "Vibrant Futures," an installation by Robin Schavoir and Lea Cetera. The main attraction here is a film, one of a series, that chronicles the interaction of a band of hairy but very civilized Big Foot characters and some primitive hippies. Throughout the show, numerous Guild & Greyshkul artists, like Mr. Degen and Mr. Johnson, remind you of the gallery's sustained vitality.

Anna Conway is showing a brooding image of a darkened stadium; Valerie Hagerty's very large "Warped Space" leans against a wall, representing an immense, badly torqued canvas by Albert Bierstadt. Back in the former office is Halsey Rodman's wonderfully serene video of a sculpture class working at an immense communal table with a live model at its center: a large man stretched out on his back.

In addition to all the art, there are performances and video screenings organized by Mariah Robertson, another artist in the gallery, each night of the show's short run. The Sunday event includes at least 20 naked minotaurs, a trio of tap dancers and Ms. Robertson, dressed as a clam.

Mr. VanDerBeek said that as the gallery was finishing the challenging installation of the show on Thursday afternoon, the tap dancers were also there, having their first rehearsal with their accompanist, a drummer. "Things got a bit crazy," he said.

"On From Here" continues through Sunday at Guild & Greyshkul, 28 Wooster Street, SoHo; (212) 625-9224.