

## “White Collar Crimes”, curated by Vito Schnabel, Acquavella Gallery, NY

Katy Diamond Hamer

11.03.2013

The Upper East Side is becoming cool. Yes, you read that correctly. Post-Hurricane Sandy, the winds seemed to have changed direction and several young curators and artists alike have found themselves exhibiting in the neighborhood most known for secondary market galleries and high-end boutiques. I happen to love the Upper East Side, having lived there for many years before jumping across the East River to Williamsburg, Brooklyn. I liked the close proximity to Central Park, the Metropolitan Museum, Guggenheim Museum, and the Whitney and cannot deny the pull and enjoyment of window shopping on Madison Avenue. However, I would not have predicted that some of the best shows that I've seen in the last several months have been away from the far reaching Westside of Chelsea, instead appearing in townhouses and galleries between 77th street and 79th street. This also rings true for the recent opening and exhibition on view at Acquavella, curated by Vito Schnabel. After having written about Lola Schnabel's exhibition at the Tripoli Gallery Pop-Up not long ago, I didn't expect to see so many relevant works on display this time at Acquavella, a family-owned and run gallery founded by Nicholas Acquavella in 1921. From their website:

The gallery first specialized in works of the Italian Renaissance, but in 1960, when William Acquavella joined his father, the focus of the gallery expanded to major works of the 19th and 20th centuries, including masters of Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Cubism and Surrealism. Recently, William Acquavella has been joined by daughter Eleanor and sons Nicholas and Alexander, and the entire scope of the 20th century is now represented, including Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art.



(Left) The Bruce High Quality Foundation Self Portrait (Nefertiti), 2012 Plaster bust, enamel paint, cigarette butt 15 1/4 x 7 x 8 1/2 inches Courtesy the artist and Vito Schnabel © The Bruce High Quality Foundation. (Right) Rashid Johnson, Our People, Kind Of 2010 Black soap, wax, brass, books, spray paint, plants, shea butter Private Collection © Rashid Johnson; Rita Ackermann, Fire by Days XXI, 2012 Oils, pigments, acrylic medium with sand, spray paint on canvas 65 x 62 inches Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth © Rita Ackermann

Schnabel's exhibit titled “White Collar Crimes” brings a group of hip young artists to a gallery that normally shows the work of many who are no longer with us. The result is a well installed exhibit that occupies each room in the expansive space with elegance, nothing being overdone. Even with content from artists like Dan Colen including dirt on canvas (Drag your Feet, 2010) and plaster busts by Bruce High Quality Foundation, (Self Portrait (Youth), 2012, Plaster bust, enamel paint, cigarette butt). The featured artwork moves the viewer throughout the space with its high ceilings and curved staircase.

The juxtaposition between the refined interior architecture isn't lost by the contemporary art present but rather enhanced as one is reminded of the richness of New York's recent past but also of the diversity of contemporary artists producing today. The art in “White Collar Crimes” doesn't all necessarily belong together, but the precise install and pairing has resulted in what could be considered a museum quality survey of young artists working today. The title itself seems to almost poke fun at the wealth and environment in which it exists, also absorbing any preconceived notions that may arise when in such a space. The Acquavella gallery truly offers a dynamic realm for looking at contemporary art. Along with another young curator, Vladimir Restoin Roitfeld, who has taken the plunge showing artists uptown, Schnabel and his sister Lola, not only caught the wave but is helping to keep it going while others ride along.



(Left) Joe Bradley, Flattop, 2011 (Left) Luv, 2009 (Right). Oil on canvas & Grease pencil on canvas Installation view Private Collection © Joe Bradley.  
 (Right) Josh Smith, Untitled, 2011, Mixed media on panel, 60 x 48 inches. Courtesy the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York © Josh Smith.

Favorites from “White Collar Crimes” include a fantastic piece by Rashid Johnson, *Our People, Kind Of*, 2010 (Black soap, wax, brass, books, spray paint, plants, Shea butter), which is a large work on canvas along with “shelves” that feature house plants. The work is a minimal, sculptural painting likening to the Rauschenberg combines, hanging on the wall but due to the presence of the plants, an object needing to be ‘fed’. This piece functions as an anchor for “White Collar Crimes” and Johnson’s presence, a black artist in an otherwise dominantly Caucasian group, lessens the satirical elucidation of the exhibition title.

Another standout are a series of busts on the second floor by the Bruce High Quality Foundation. The busts which are installed in nooks close to the gallery ceiling, are plaster replications of famous individuals such as Nefertiti and Napoleon, having been “vandalized”, sometimes rearranged and smoking a cigarette. They offer a humoristic take on history, the concept of monument and liken back to a scene from *Batman* (1989) directed by Tim Burton where the Joker (Jack Nicholson) breaks into a museum and with a group of his cronies, spray paints many of the artworks, paintings and sculpture with a bright red mouth.

“White Collar Crimes”, will be on view at Acquavella until March 27th, 2013 and is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with essays by curator Vito Schnabel, art critic David Rimanelli and Agnes Gund, President Emerita of The Museum of Modern Art.

<http://www.acquavellagalleries.com/>