

VENUS

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The interior of Haroon Mirza's "Access Boot" at Lisson Gallery.

Independent Projects opened last night at 548 West 22nd Street in Manhattan, billed as a unique mix of art fair and traditional exhibition (and touted by curatorial advisor Matthew Higgs as an assortment of “40 solo shows”). What did this strange beast look like, exactly? Well, a bit like a place where you could buy stuff but also grope a stranger in a box (Yves Klein’s “Sculpture Tactile,” circa 1957, at Dominique Lévy’s booth), watch a bubble machine overflow itself (David Medalla’s “Cloud Canyon” at **Venus Over Manhattan**), and trip out to lo-fi techno inside a Haroon Mirza room (Lisson Gallery).

As promised, there is an eclectic range of work hailing from various eras: A Joan Jonas video performance with sculptural elements at Gavin Brown’s Enterprise; abstract paintings from the ’60s incorporating collaged-in window shades by Robert Moskowitz at Kerry Schuss, who is concurrently showing new paintings by the artist at his Lower East Side location; Duane Hanson’s jarring “Flea Market Lady,” presented by Karma. At Zwirner’s corridor-like space there’s a frenzy of Raymond Pettibon drawings tacked to walls that have been augmented by the artist with sculptural items — including an

impaled baseball mitt — and blood-red text (such as “Till we be twit can we nat type,” perhaps a coy reference to Pettibon’s bizarre, semantically adventurous Twitter).

There’s a lot of raw stuff here: Thornton Dial’s gnarly assemblages and very-mixed-media paintings at Andrew Edlin Gallery; Rosy Keyser’s deconstructed sculpture-paintings at Maccarone, which incorporate things like scrub-brushes and wood; a huge, 22-piece spraypaint-on-linen text work by Stefan Bruggemann, at Parra & Romero. Graham Collins’s sculptures with the Journal Gallery manhandle similarly blunt materials — wood, window tint, bricks — into the refined language of Minimalism. (Virginia Overton, with Mitchell-Innes & Nash, accomplishes a similar feat, building a sort of site-specific triangular fort out of bare wood planks.) A different sort of rawness is apparent at Max Wigram Gallery, where John Giorno has cleanly rendered text paintings expressing thoughts too dirty to reproduce here.

Conversely, there’s plenty that’s slick and generally pleasant: Sam Falls’s hippy-palette, weather-facilitated paintings at Hannah Hoffman Gallery, for instance, or Nicolas Deshayes’s multi-part “Vein Sections (or a cave paintings),” 2014, at Jonathan Viner, which resembles an elaborate advertisement demonstrating how people reaching for their cell phones can appear to be wielding guns; a series of warm-blue watercolors by Allora & Calzadilla at Gladstone Gallery, based on photographs of water coolers taken at the offices of banks and other loaded sites. Heavyweight Gagosian Gallery has a new series of embroidery-and-precious-stone-on-velvet paintings by Piotr Uklanski that don’t quite know whether to be ironic or decorative. White Columns has ceramic vessels by June Hamper, including several of whimsical cats, which is something I will never, ever say no to.

So overall, is Independent Projects an art fair or a 40-part group show? I’d advise that you ponder the question for 20 minutes or so at Lisson Gallery’s space, standing inside Mirza’s “Access Boot,” 2014, which turns DJ Misjah’s 1990 song “Access” into a multi-sensory dance party: error-message bleeps and blurts as lo-fi techno. After that jittery, immersive experience — simultaneously annoying and intensely soothing, if that’s possible — those distinctions between art and commerce will seem far less important.

- Scott Indrisek