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- Art**
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- Clubs
- Comedy
- Dance
- Film
- Games
- Gay
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- Music
- Opera & Classical
- Own This City
- Real Estate
- Restaurants & Bars
- Sex & Dating
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- Spas & Sport
- Theater
- Travel
- TV
- Video

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Art

Time Out New York / Issue 706 : Apr 9-15, 2009

Critic's Rating

Art review

"The Practice of Joy Before Death; It just would not be a party without you"

Scaramouche, through Apr 19



Seth Scantlen, Put it in Photograph: Courtesy Scaramouche, NY

As its title (an allusion to Georges Bataille) suggests, this show is a convivial, over-the-top mix of neophytes and luminaries assembled by the artist collective Die Störung. The group's own contribution consists of a neat plywood bench, topped with bubblegum-pink cushions, that runs around the gallery; Thanks to the bench's built-in niches, an astonishing amount of art has been squeezed into this tiny storefront space.

The longer one looks, the more shared sensibilities begin to emerge. A punkish feminism unites Jutta Koether's painting with Ann Liv Young's Plexiglas box containing her own feces and crusty black thong. Craft turns up in Dana Hoey's quiltlike photcollage and Alyssa Phoebus's elegant text drawing, which resembles machine-stitched fabric. Gabriel Martinez's commodity-art tableau of stolen designer handbags faces off against Blake Rayne's arrangement of DVD packaging that's reminiscent of late-'60s album-cover art.

Other works seem more Dada, like Martha Rosler's agitprop collage or Keil Borman's art-storage-rack-cum-soup-kitchen. For her hilarious video of the exhibit's opening, Einat Amir hired a kvetching actor to stand in for her art.

As at any good party, everyone seems pretty relaxed. For the youngest artists here, influence appears less a source of anxiety than something to be taken for granted, while the more established figures are in a teasing or speculative mood. At times, this gathering barely hangs together, yet it works—a welcome break from recessionary funk.—Anne Doran

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