

frieze

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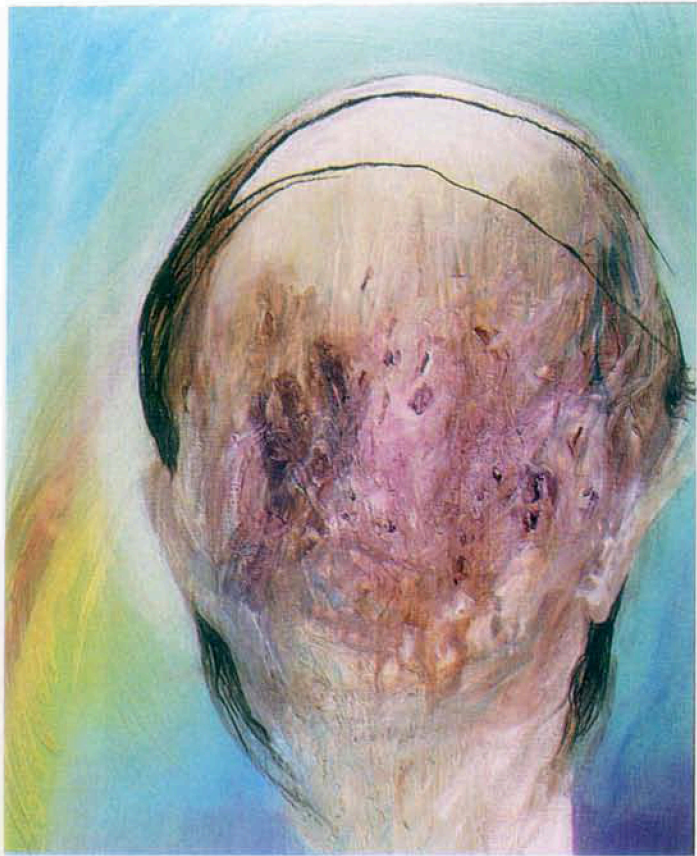
Greater New York

P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, USA

Opening during the dizzying Armory Fair week in March, 'Greater New York 2005' ('GNY05') drew more than the usual attention and anxiety that accompany exhibitions touted as bellwether surveys. Having cast itself at the centre of the current collector-driven obsession with younger artists, 'GNY05' poses its most interesting questions around the miscegenating relationships proliferating between economics, artistic practices and institutions. Deflowered by the overheated market that launched the careers of a number of the artists featured in the first version of this show in 2000 (Do-Ho Suh, Inka Essenhigh, Julie Mehretu and Paul Pfeiffer among them), this reincarnated enterprise had no way of separating itself from the market's engorged desire for some institutional guidance among the sea of young artists now plying their wares in New York.

The 2000 version inaugurated P.S.1's affiliation with The Museum of Modern Art and provided a welcome foil to that year's Whitney Biennial and its habitually ridiculed national pretensions. But the stakes are higher now, and with P.S.1 accepting the burden of representing the 'emerging' art of an entire geography and local mindset – smack in the middle of an art world that continues to balloon beyond the grasp of those who constitute it – the kunsthalle has turned itself into a flashpoint. The curators have, perhaps unwittingly, tapped a spring of rising competitive ambition among local artists, and with their timing and choice of work, insufficiently protected themselves against burgeoning critical apprehension regarding the proximity of the market to exhibiting institutions. The fact that few among its critics can legitimately claim to know New York's aesthetic moment any more thoroughly than the show's curators seems besides the point in this climate, when you half-expect dealers' mobile phone numbers to show up on wall labels. On the one hand, you want to tell the moaners to get over it: there's *always* another New York, and taste is part of the mix. But on the other hand, the interest payments on those graduate school loans aren't getting any cheaper, and no one wants to get stuck without a chair when the cash register stops chiming.

None of this is to say that 'GNY05' isn't a decent show. There is plenty here that looks mildly interesting, if ultimately mostly familiar. As before, 'GNY05' involved a committee of roughly 30 curators from P.S.1 and MoMA, who, along with the directors of the two institutions, reviewed the work of over 2,000 artists and visited hundreds of studios, taking into account suggestions from untold numbers of 'artists, art schools, galleries and other art professionals' and open submission entries. This time, however, the 160-plus artists were specifically supposed to have 'emerged' since the last show, even if there wasn't any clear agreement on what that meant exactly. Complicating matters, the curatorial team, led by P.S.1's Chief



Greater New York: Daniel Hesidence
Untitled (Chambers Street Paintings)
2003 Oil on board 46x38cm

Curator, Klaus Biesenbach, attempted to review artistic production during the past five years while speaking for the present moment and beyond.

This present-past-future undertaking isn't as muddled as it sounds. Elements from the first show reappear and don't feel out of place, making the last five years feel more like a month. Justin Faunce's blooming brand of Pop painting picks up on Erik Parker, just as John J. O'Connor's *Earthquakes and Wars* (2003) and Dominic McGill's *Project for a New American Century* (2004) seem to grow out of the late Mark Lombardi's conspiracy charts. But no one needs to point out that many things have changed in the past five years, a point driven home by the twin columns of smoke in Jules de Balincourt's word painting *United We Stood* (2005). Suicide bombings show up in a handful of pieces, along with other glimmers of political critique.

Artists still have it pretty good, though, if not better than they did five years ago. Amid the wars, lies, fear and recession that have followed 11 September 2001, more money, opportunity and public attention has been lavished on New York artists. Although artists remain affected by the city's general anxieties, the relatively privileged rank afforded emerging artists in particular may account for the status quo feel of