

Finding a Summer Niche

Even in the Slow Season, Galleries Sell Their Wares

By **NELL GLUCKMAN**
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For galleries in New York, the summer season is notoriously slow. Major clients relocate to their second homes outside the city, leaving their collections stagnant for a few months while Chelsea swells with tourists. Though group shows keep the gallery walls filled with current work, dealers also take the opportunity to flex their curatorial muscle and experiment with creative marketing techniques.

David Findlay Jr. Fine Art hosts its annual Summerset show, featuring the work of 27 of the gallery's most important artists. According to director Louis Newman, the gallery saves some of its rarest work for this show.

"I've always had the viewpoint that you have to give people a thoughtful show. We never make decisions based on the whims of the economy of that month," Mr. Newman said.

Several months ago, Mr. Newman acquired a painting by New York artist George McNeil, which he saved specifically for Summerset. The show also gives viewers the chance to see the paintings of New York artist Emily Mason, who otherwise shows at the gallery only once every two years.

Summerset is also a high point in another way: The gallery creates its most extensive catalog of the year to accompany this show. "There is a rarity to these works," Mr. Newman said. "I didn't want a summer show that had the look and feel of things that were pulled out of the back room at the last minute."

Susan Eley, owner of an eponymous gallery in an Upper West Side townhouse, marketed her summer group show *Blaze* with a fail-safe approach: She sent cookies to her entire mailing list, along with the reception invitation. The colorful, icing-heavy cookies (which were readily consumed in

the Sun's newsroom) were meant to draw attention to the show's theme: sunshine.

The idea is taken up in vastly different ways by artists working in a variety of mediums. Artist Kim Luttrell's large collages of flowers stand in contrast to a David Marrus photograph of two women lounging idly in the sun in the south of France. Ellen Hermanos's vibrant color field paintings lend an air of abstraction to the show. Ms. Eley said she wanted to "try something a little more fun, on the lighter side."

Another themed group show is currently up at the Luhring Augustine Gallery. The show, entitled "It's Not Your Fault," showcases the installation works of nine Icelandic artists. Olafur Eliasson's waterfalls and a new gallery created specifically for the work of Nordic artists called More North are only two other examples of the large presence Icelandic artists have had in New York recently.

Perhaps the most provocative show — titled "Who's Afraid of Jasper Johns?" — this summer was at the Tony Shafrazi Gallery. The show was created by another gallery owner, Gavin Brown, and the Swiss artist Urs Fischer, who had every inch of Tony Shafrazi's last show, "Four Friends," photographed and then turned into wallpaper. "Four Friends" was a show of works by Keith Haring, Jean-Michael Basquiat, Donald Baechler, and Kenny Scharf that was on view in the gallery from October through April.

The wallpaper made from that show created a two-dimensional version of the exhibition, and it was hung in the gallery as a backdrop to "Who's Afraid of Jasper Johns?" — with works by Lawrence Weiner, Francis Bacon, Robert Ryman, Cindy Sherman, and Richard Prince, among others. Pieces from the new show are mounted on top of the reproduc-

tions from the older show.

And the invitation itself was an eye-catcher. The image was a photo of Mr. Shafrazi being arrested in 1974. At the time, the then-artist had spray-painted the words "KILL LIES ALL" on Pablo Picasso's painting "Guernica" while it hung at the Museum of Modern Art. He then shouted, "Call the curator, I am an artist!" The case was settled in court as a misdemeanor, and the spray paint was removed from the varnish that coated the painting's surface.

Gallery director Hiroko Onoda says, "The exhibition became about art on art. It's really about layering and seeing what happens when these unexpected pieces collide."

But not all gallery owners need to go that far to make a splash. Some just rely on the changes in the market. Sundaram Tagore, whose galleries in Chelsea, Los Angeles, and Hong Kong specialize in international art, says the stigma against summer shows may be changing with a globalized economy. While Mr. Tagore acknowledges that many of his clients have left for the summer, new ones emerge. "European collectors are coming in, offsetting some of the local sales," he said. "There are a lot of Italian, German, and British tourists. And for them it doesn't feel that expensive."

Not only that, it's not summer in every part of the world. "Previously, you had New York and London as centers of dissemination of art," he said. "Today, you have Hong Kong, then Dubai is coming up, then India and China. And the Chinese are not only buying Chinese art."

But it doesn't take a gallery owner to know what's happening. Elevator operator David Delvalle has spent years shuttling the art crowd up and down in the Wolf Building on 26th Street in Chelsea, which houses at least eight galleries. And this year, this art-world insider has seen a shift: "Usually this month is dead, but now it's more active. It's because of the Euro."