

ART

The New Museum show is the kind of in-depth look at a younger artist which all New York museums should risk.

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"Chill Out New York" is over, but I'd like to comment on it anyway. It was an exhibition of mostly East Village artists plus some sympathetic sensibilities from other quarters of the New York art world curated by Steve Kaplan of "Totem" fame. Without being a very good show overall, it was an unexpectedly revealing one, due both to who was and was not included. It was held in the honeycomb of large and small galleries which is Kenkeleba House, Inc., one of the Lower East Side's two (with P.S. 122) alternate spaces and one which, with proper funding, some renovation, and an ambitious curatorial program, could become as significant as Artistspace or P.S. 1. The basic architecture is there.

Kaplan's show was one of the quietest, least polemical to have concentrated on East Village art. It was lacking in several of the better talents associated with the area: David Wojnarowicz, Arch Connelly, Peter Schuyff, any of the major graffiti artists, among others, or any of the Nature Morte, IWM crowd (excepting Joseph Nechvatal). In other ways it was merely a round up of the usual suspects whose work seems to weaken with each exposure: Hambleton, Kostabi, Renzoni, Quinones, Futura, Prol. In the largest gallery, each wall had as centerpiece a predominantly burgundy painting of figures or faces by either Hambleton, Kostabi, Renzoni, or Sy Ross, an inadvertent comment on the monotony of much recent figurative-photographic gimmickry.

There were strong works by Walter Robinson, Donald Baechler, Robin Winters, Bobby G, and Jane Bauman. But what really saved the show was the strength of relative unknowns such as Carl Affarian (a two-piece abstract-imagistic painting in shades of gray), Brigitta Rohrbach (a photo-work which manages to derive from Charlesworth, Goldstein, and Brauntuch without seeming derivative), and Kunie Sugiura (the kind of brushy figurative mishmash I usually hate, but didn't). I wouldn't want to give Kaplan the idea for his next exhibition, but best news of all was that a small group of abstract painters seemed consistently outstanding or promising: Christopher Wool, Bernd Naber, Sue Williams, Jeff Gompertz, and Peggy Cyphers. In the meantime, visit Kenkeleba House; it's on the eastern border of the East Village gallery scene, and full of potential (Kenkeleba House, 214-16 East Second