

new art examiner

The East Village: Is the party over now?

by JUDD TULLY

Rick Prol's by-now classic image of the skinny guy in a motorcycle jacket with a trio of knives sticking through his neck while he sits on a toilet and strangles a black cat is still sought after by serious collectors. But at the same time as Prol's violent and funky imagery is being admired in Hal Bromm's brand new space on Avenue A, a platoon of collectors, critics, and curator types are taking in the mannerist and swirly figures in the landscape by the Italian Lorenzo Bonechi at Sharpe.

Like a satellite dish picking up thousands of broadcasts, the East Village has become a fickle video screen programmed by the media and the market. In a much simpler way, the stereotype of the young artist hitting the jackpot came alive for me two years ago when I saw a famous Chicago collector in a black cashmere overcoat clapping Rick Prol on the back in a tiny gallery on East 6th Street, telling him how easy it would be to arrange a museum show. During the exchange the collector's frail wife stood in the doorway, swathed in mink, surveying the street in nervous disbelief. That vignette of a "star is born" is hopelessly out of date now. But I believe the greenhorn painters and assemblers still cling to it. It is a romantic notion. It has taken just four years to grow from Fun and graffiti to at least 60 galleries that can all tell an invoice from an eviction notice. After *The New Bohemia*, John Gruen went on to write *The Party's Over Now*, and I'm beginning to believe him. ■