

## reviews: new york

### 'Who's Afraid of Jasper Johns?'

Tony Shafrazi

This unusually exhilarating, complex, and provocative exhibition, conceived by Swiss artist Urs Fischer (known for slicing holes in museum walls) and gallerist Gavin Brown (whose gallery floor Fischer recently excavated), played Tony Shafrazi's gallery like a DJ sampling the top tunes of the past 40 years.

Think of it as a one-man show (Fischer's); or as a twisted collaboration by Fischer, Brown, and Shafrazi; or as a group show with artists ranging from Picasso and Bacon to Cady Noland and Georg Herold. The walls, doors, and ceiling of the gallery were covered with photographic trompe l'oeil wallpaper: a scale simulation of the gallery itself and its previous exhibition, "Four Friends." Real works by significant elders—Malcolm Morley, Lawrence Weiner—were hung over photographs of graffiti-derived works by Keith Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Kenny Scharf, and Donald Baechler. Doorways were papered with views down the corridors beyond them. And two guards stood beside life-size photocopies of themselves.

"Who's Afraid of Jasper Johns?" was a brilliant cannibalistic coup: two exhibitions in one, with reconfigured memories. The show referred to Michael Asher's empty exhibition spaces and to William Anastasi's scaled-down replicas

of gallery walls. It was also a hoot, with installations like Rob Pruitt's *Viagra Falls* (2008) cascading down Shafrazi's ridiculously grand staircase, spiked with 2,000 milligrams of Viagra (paper cups were provided at the top of the stairs), and Lily van der Stokker's flood of aqua water rising to engulf the photo works. Rudolf Stingel's wall-to-wall white carpet installation was stained by the dregs of Rirkrit Tiravanija's *tom ka* soup. An actual subway drawing by Haring was hung over photo images of other works by him from Shafrazi's previous show, and the disorientation was compounded by Robert Morris's undulating mirror, plastic, and bronze sculpture, which reflected everything like a mirror in a celestial fun house.

This show could be considered an extension of Shafrazi's 1974 graffiti attack on *Guernica* at the Museum of Modern Art, in which he spray-painted in red the words "Kill Lies All." The poster for this exhibition depicts Shafrazi, poker-faced, being led away by two cops. The rest, as Fischer and Brown prove, is either selective amnesia or history.

—Kim Levin



"Who's Afraid of Jasper Johns?"

with work, from left, by Rob Pruitt, Keith Haring, Kenny Scharf, and John Chamberlain. Tony Shafrazi.