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Greater New York, review part III

- Posted by [artreview.com](#) on June 15, 2010 at 12:09pm in [First View](#)
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By Tyler Coburn

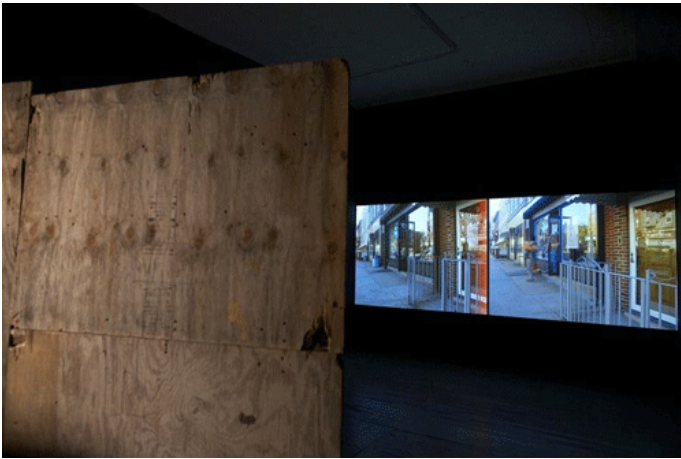
Informed reader, both you and I know the real criticism should be left to the experts, which is why I'm happy to report that my *ArtReview* colleagues' takes on Greater New York will compensate for this tenuous use of this site's kilobyteage. Their learning and wit should provide the analytical means to slice, julienne, cube, skewer, sauté, boil and reduce this sixty-eight artist strong quinquennial into something palatable. For my six-hundred-odd words of contribution, I've taken instead to the couch, not by cause of the psychological damage suffered from failing to secure my own three walls of P.S.1 exhibition space (for the fault lies less with curator Neville Wakefield's lack of insight than his impressive ability to perceive, in the fifteen minutes he allotted, the sheer number of red ends and loose herrings that could then be called my studio practice).

Nor am I taking to the couch on behalf of my befuddled artist friends who, last fall, when Wakefield and co-curators Klaus Biesenbach and Connie Butler made the rounds, were perplexed that they, *of all people*, what with their degrees from the Big Three of Columbia, Bard and Yale – finishing schools that contributed a number of participants to GNY 2010, incidentally – were not solicited! Which led them to wonder: who exactly was getting studio visits? Who were these seven-hundred lucky few? This anecdote merely serves to illustrate the snobbery colloquially conferred to Greater New York, that clearing house for recent MFAs – notwithstanding the many participants who already had commercial gallery credits slapped to the ends of their courtesy lines.



Lucy Raven, *China Town* (2009), photographic animation, courtesy of the artist

Supine me, instead, because of surprise that this clearing house should prove the greatest of cardiologists, in a year of pulse-taking that witnessed curating as *Craigslist Casual Encounter* (*Younger than Jesus*), and curating as *cardiac arrest* (*the Whitney Biennial*). Most welcome, among the offerings, was Lucy Raven's *China Town* (2009), a fifty-minute photographic animation that tracks copper production from ore harvesting, in Western America, to a smelter in China, providing an exactly wrought origin story for the wires that weave vast, information networks beneath the world. Raven's video *4:3 public service announcements* (2008/2010) builds a theoretical scaffold in the form of scrolling, televisual texts that predict the coming obsolescence of such wire, given the shift to digital and satellite-based broadcasting, and speculate about its potential scavenging and reuse.



Elizabeth Subrin, *Lost Tribes and Promised Lands* (2001-2010), Two channel digital video installation from 16mm, salvaged wood. 6min, Courtesy the artist and Sue Scott Gallery, New York

Another excellent work is Elizabeth Subrin's *Lost Tribes and Promised Lands* (2001-2010), a two-channel HD projection of 16mm footage the artist shot throughout Williamsburg, Brooklyn in the days following September 11th, 2001 and then in 2008. Static, restrained shot compositions capture the neighborhood's storefronts and buildings, leaving we cultural iconographers to infer signs, from the various advertisements, stickers and posters adorning many facades, of the shifting socio-cultural climate over this eight-year period.

If Raven and Subrin's projects – as well as contributions by Sharon Hayes, Gilad Ratman, Hank Willis Thomas and a handful of others – presented singular voices and intensities, works by other artists appeared to suffer identity crises. Paintings just wanted to get off the wall and onto the shelf, where the vibe is casual – where, *méconnaissance* pending, they might resemble dust jacket design and seem, by association, cleverer – bookish, even. Flat works were no longer content to hang or be hung, but instead illustrated the titles of lost *Seinfeld* episodes: the lean, the fold, the drape, per Dave Miko, Sam Moyer, Debo Eilers, DAS INSTITUT. Images tried very hard to be objects, and who am I to besmirch such good-looking breakdowns?

Choreography aside, my first four hours of Greater New York induced a pleasant swimming sensation. I'll let my fellow scribblers report back on the ridiculously overstuffed calendar of films, programming and sub-curated exhibitions that accompany the show, though any bid for relevance endeavored through maximal association is a bit suspect. That being said, it's true that the loosest and baggiest monsters offer more to hold onto, so your favorite handle and grasp dearly, dear reader.

This article is part of a series of reviews for *ArtReview* about Greater New York III at P.S.1. You can read Joshua Mack's review of Greater New York [here](#), and David Everitt Howe's [here](#).

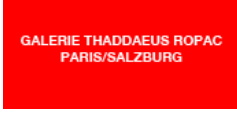
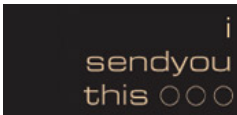
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