

Hreinn Fridfinnsson  
Bláhorn 2010



*Invisible Cities.* Leonia's inhabitants are so obsessed with newness that they remake everything each day – everything is thrown away after one use. Somehow, even though this piece was a bit all over the place, the invocation of Leonia added a different conception of architecture to the exhibition. Protecting their own corner of the world, Leonia's inhabitants make everything else into a hellish junkyard – an enlightening take on the idea that someone 'cornered', only concerned with protecting their own patch, inherently damages everyone else's.

Somehow Patrick Tuttofuoco's sculptures made using empty balaclava heads, which I have seen before and which didn't really make much impact on me, made sense in this respect. The stiffened balaclavas, which create the impression that they are being worn by invisible men, have been sprayed with neon aerosol paint and surrounded with horrifically sharp anti-pigeon spikes, creating the sense that a mask is both a place to hide and also an invocation of extreme tribalism (heads on spikes) as a way to think about the nature of an urban gangland landscape.

The events of 9/11 gave us a cultural fear, not only of actual physical corners but also, arguably, of ethical or philosophical ones: we are frightened that absolutes are dead ends. If there is a renewed ambivalence in our mainstream culture towards religion, for example, is this not also somehow a suspicion of corners, of the safe shelter that religious belief can provide? The fight for public spaces to be neutral and secular, as evidenced most extremely in France's banning of the veil, is a metaphorical ironing out of corners as hiding places and of the notion that, in the contemporary world, there can ever be an absolutely solid ethos (a term that comes from the word for home) for making decisions. We are more likely to be found in the unfixed space, like Bourne on the run, constantly changing position and identities to suit any given landscape. But do we miss the idea of a safehouse? The corner as concept, in this exhibition, acted as a secure point from which the ideas and the exhibited artworks could fly freely while remaining securely tethered. ■

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## Greater New York

PS1 New York 23 May to 18 October

Greater New York may be considered New York City's answer to The British Art Show: this quinquennial exhibition features work by emerging artists from the greater metropolitan area. Founded in 2000, this third incarnation features the work of 68 artists and collectives. While this may seem unwieldy, it is a significant scaling back from the last iteration, which featured over 200 artists. The decrease in numbers means that almost every artist has his or her own gallery. Jointly organised by PS1 and MoMA, the artists were selected by a panel including Klaus Biesenbach, director of PS1, Connie Butler, chief curator of drawings at MoMA, and Neville Wakefield, PS1 senior curatorial adviser. Given the abiding interests of this team, it is no surprise that the show features a predominance of performance and documentation works, as well as a fair share of female artists.

The exhibition itself spreads throughout the vast expanses of the former public school and makes one realise that the PS1 team has been wise to avoid a slick architectural makeover; by leaving the various rooms intact, although at times it resembles a warren, the building retains its immense character and each space feels unique. This contrasts favourably with the Whitney Museum, which at times feels too institutionalised for the emerging Biennial artists. Indeed, Greater New York has often been called an alternative to the Whitney Biennial.

Upon entering PS1, the visitor is confronted with a large wall-based text piece that reads: ERECT AND MASSIVE. Detext, a Romanian/Spanish team, contributes several of these text works that are scattered throughout the building. Playing on the language of phone sex line advertisements, Detext's piece reminds one that the current iteration has been dubbed pejoratively among cognoscenti as the 'gay and multiracial' Greater New York. This is made obvious in the work of many artists in the show, where gay and lesbian themes abound, including that of Leidy Churchman, David Benjamin Sherry, Kalup Linzy, K8 Hardy and AL Steiner.

Churchman uses naive-style painting on board, sculpture and video to express openly gay themes. While his practice seems to be concerned with a 'de-skilling', much of the queer-centred work uses lens-based media to express notions of identity and subjectivity. For example, Benjamin Sherry's hallucinogenic colour photographs acknowledge the digital world and perhaps the gay man's alienation from it. The collective AL Steiner uses candid, snapshot-style photography to mount a floor-to-ceiling, room-sized collage of graphic, confrontational lesbian culture. This was less successful than K8 Hardy's photographs of herself dressed in various guises, with superimposed images of found objects, such as a bra, that acknowledge second-wave feminism, including its ubiquitous matriarch Cindy Sherman. However, as a founder of LTTR (Lesbians to the Rescue), the radical lesbian collective, Hardy's works resist the high production values and oppositional tactics of earlier generations. Instead they hover somewhere between street fashion shoots and low-budget music videos. She has in fact styled both Fischerspooner and LeTigre.

Linzy, who remains a rising star on the NY scene with work