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WORK

By Roberta Smith

Klaus Von Nichtssagend Gallery
54 Ludlow Street, near Grand Street
Lower East Side
Through July 27

Organized on the model of a factory assembly line, this group show may be the last word in collaboration. It was organized by the multimedia artist Sara Greenberger Rafferty based on a class she taught with the painter Michelle Grabner, at Ox-Bow, a school of art and artists' residency in Saugatuck, Mich., last summer.

The 14 artists, (Ms. Greenberger Rafferty included), spent a day settling on the painting they would make and their individual motifs, set of marks or procedure. Then over the next harried day, each made his or her contribution to 40 20-by-16-inch canvases, working in production-line sequence, at least until certain bottlenecks developed. (Some artists had more to do than others.) The resulting works are reasonably similar pastiches of 1980s Neo-Expression and the physically idiosyncratic abstract painting of today.

Yuri Masnyj got things rolling with a large gray shape that seems to have suggested to several other participants a Mr. Potato Head waiting to happen. TM Davy added eyes and nose. Kate Shepherd applied ears. Eddie Martinez contributed bright red glasses frames and Sam Moyer provided a halo. Joanne Greenbaum, Katherine Bernhardt and Sarah Crowner, as well as Ms. Moyer, surrounded this character with various abstract elements in colored pencil, brown paint, red and magenta silk-screen and black ink. David Kennedy Cutler, Michael Mahalchick, Ms. Grabner and Ian Pedigo made various physical interventions using yarn, string, fabric and a pen knife. B. Wurtz collaged an image of potatoes for Mr. Potato Head's mouth, until supplies ran out and he substituted pictures of other produce. Ms. Greenberger Rafferty whispered an insult into each canvas and applied a Band-Aid.

Judging by the results, boredom set in fairly quickly and artistic individuality increasingly asserted itself. Apparently there was no one in charge of quality control.