

Noah Becker's

WHITEHOT MAGAZINE

of contemporary art TM

GutBox Profile

Over the past year my search for collectives functioning in and around New York has been bleak. Although there are no shortage of communal spaces like Flux Factory or the Wooster Collective for artists to bounce ideas and themes around, I was on the prowl for true collectives: individuals collaborating on work while preserving their own aesthetic decisions. My traipses around Manhattan and specific searches unveiled the BirdBeak Collective, the closest resemblance to my ideal conglomeration of minds. I was enraptured by the frenzied paintings of Nick Dyball and Chris Duffy's heinously crude illustrations, but the group was lacking a rotund spark. Birdbeak's ashes birthed GutBox, a subsequent nine person collective spanning painters, illustrators, and even sculptural enthusiasts. Picking up steam from their first appearance at X Initiative's Bring Your Own Art event in February 2010, the collective launched their first group show at YGallery on the Bowery the week before Thanksgiving. The collective emphasizes "narrative threads through collective participation," tossing at least three eggs in the basket for each piece. Supplementary visitors, invited specially by the artists and usually reeled in from grad school or early artistic forays in New York, are integrated accordingly.

The canvases are rarely worked on, or completed for that matter, in the same session. Each participant is left to their distinct visual devices and encouraged to impart their own outlook and strengths in the midst of free-for-all collaboration. The work is tempered and tweaked until the individual is satisfied by their component then slipped into the next set of hands on the subway or street like a pusher handling shifty merchandise. The group decides communally when each birch tablet is completed. Clutter is kept watchfully at bay. A visual scavenger hunt ensues to decipher respective subtleties. The emergent asteroids are tokens of communication, monuments of perceptual mash-ups. Whispers of Jazzminh Moore's figurative studies, Heather Hart's gold leaf accents, and Ray Sell's bold collage unite in a shocking seamlessness, oftentimes pulling several separate narratives into the same image. Disparate components strike like scorpions, stunning with augmented venom. There is a variation in appeal and sentiment in the works, allowing one to explore the depths of each artist's flexibility. The spirited works are a joyous shriek, shattering the stagnation of 'recession art' and tired commentary on the sad state of affairs. The work references inside jokes, comical observations of city living, and a slideshow of personal memory. Its as if nothing can frighten this collective: not line, shape, color, three-dimensionality, text, tedious media, square canvases, or even giving up complete control of the subsequent outcome (to a certain extent). GutBox is an indelible spurt of confidence, innovation, and undoubtedly quality work.



Jazz-minh Moore, Ulrike Theusner, Heather Hart, *Late Night Ideas*, 2010
12" x 12", mixed media on birch panel