

Ryan Sullivan

Clarissa Dalrymple on Her Greater New Yorkers

By Brienne Walsh

Art in America website, posted September 16th, 2010



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Clarissa Dalrymple is the best unsung hero the art world has. Best known for her discovery of Matthew Barney in the 1980s, she's been working on the fringes of the art world ever since, as a champion of young talent and an elegant fixture in the scene. P.S. 1 chose Dalrymple to curate the last of four Rotating Galleries on view timed to Greater New York, succeeding Cecilia Alemani (who curated Rotating Gallery 3) to close the show. Her portion of the exhibition, which will run from September 11 through October 18, features three autonomous series by Andrew Gbur, Michael Joaquin Grey and Ryan Sullivan, artists who are relatively below the radar in the art world.



PHOTO BY ANNA DABNEY SMITH

We sat down with Dalrymple just as a thunderstorm was breaking over Manhattan. She was leaving town for the week, and her voice crackled in the static that came through the line. This didn't stop her from waxing poetic about the art world since the 1980s, and the three artists that she had chosen for her show. "What attracted me to them is that their work looks like it has an intention that goes beyond the immediate," she explained to me. "There's a feeling of a special relationship with the works."

Her affection for the paintings, prints and sculptures she chose is pervasive throughout the Rotating Gallery 4. Although it would be difficult to find a connecting theoretical thread between the works featured, the exhibition is visually pleasing and open, a welcome change in pace from the heavily video-centric *Greater New York*. In small partition to the right, Ryan Sullivan's abstract alchemy paintings, created by applying chemicals to canvas and allowing them to independently shape the surface of his work, seem to poke fun at the drip paintings of the abstract expressionists by undermining the romantic attachment of an artist's hand to his own work.

The larger room to the left is dominated by the sculptures and prints of Michael Joaquin Grey, whose contribution to the exhibition could accurately be described as a feast for nerds. The largest of his two floor sculptures, *My Sputnik* (1989–90), is an aluminum recreation of the first human-made object to orbit the earth in 1957. Sputnik is the Russian word for "co-traveler," and Grey plays on this etymology in his prints along the back wall, which depict the space craft nestled into scenes that seem lifted from dioramas of woolly mammoths and early human life at the Museum of Natural History. Much less prominently, the large canvases of Andrew Gbur, which look like optical illusions writ large, frame the left wall of the room.

Some have called Dalrymple a secret weapon in the art world, a harbinger of future success, and I couldn't resist the temptation to ask her if the artists she chose were headed for fame and glory. Joaquin Grey might have already had his heyday, being that he was a studio mate of Matthew Barney, but both Gbur and Sullivan are in their mid-20s, and they seem ripe for picking. She scoffed a bit at the question, telling me that success was impossible to predict, although she did seem to think that it would be lovely for them. But first, she explained to me, they had to get over the burn that they might receive after the initial heat.