

ART REVIEW; Hudson Valley Shows Focus on America

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Bard College

The main attraction at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson is "Dave Muller: Connections," a survey of the prolific Late Conceptualist who is also a curator, D.J. and musician. Mr. Muller first became known for the nomadic "Three-Day Weekend" exhibitions of work by friends and acquaintances, which he started organizing in 1994 while attending the California Institute of the Arts.

But his unabashed enthusiasm for other people's art soon found an expressive outlet in the elegant watercolor posters he made and put up near galleries where the artists he admired had shows. (His admirations included Andrea Bowers, Sharon Lockhardt and Sam Durant.) Soon he was commemorating all kinds of art world events -- past and present, local and international.

This chock-full exhibition includes posters blatantly or subtly adjusted into a form of commentary for the 1913 Armory Show, all the shows at Larry Gagosian's Los Angeles gallery and the Museum of Modern Art's recent Jackson Pollock retrospective. One Pollock poster features the famous Norman Rockwell rendering of a Pollock; another depicts a felt scatter-piece by Barry Le Va, a Californian influenced by Pollock, as it appeared on the cover of a 1968 issue of Artforum. Walter Hopps and legendary Ferus Gallery, whose exhibitions of new art were central to the 1960's Los Angeles art world, are also pertinently recycled. Mr. Muller's admiration for the Situationist tactics of Michael Asher and Andre Cadere is a recurring theme.

The puns pile up and the entendres triple and quadruple in this exhibition, and few people who were not denizens of the Los Angeles art scene in the late 1990's are likely to get every allusion. That Mr. Muller's deft watercolor technique never varies or develops creates another kind of opacity. But by and large this is a good show -- engaging, touching and thoroughly intelligent. It proves that imitation is not the sincerest form of flattery: skewed, perceptive revisions that balance self and selflessness are better still.

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