



Art in Review

Aaron Young

Greeting Card

Seventh Regiment Armory
643 Park Avenue, at 66th Street
Through Sunday

If there was any doubt that we live in a reasonable facsimile of the Gilded Age, it disappeared Monday night during "Greeting Card," Aaron Young's enormous paint-by-motorcycle spectacle in the vast, emptied-out drill hall of the Seventh Regiment Armory. For nearly 10 minutes, a dozen bikers wheeled, skidded and fish-tailed their heavy machines across a 72-by-128-foot surface of plywood, burning random lines through a layer of black paint to reveal shades of fluorescent orange beneath. Named after a 1944 Jackson Pollock painting, "Greeting Card" expanded exponentially on Harold Rosenberg's characterization of the Abstract Expressionist canvas as "an arena in which to act." It was action painting with lots of horsepower.

Several hundred denizens of the spheres of art and fashion were in attendance, observing from raised balconies and bleachers. Watching gladiators at the Roman Colosseum was not a far-fetched analogy. The performance was followed by drinks in the Armory's baronial Tiffany Room and dinner on long tables with black tablecloths, courtesy of Tobias Meyer of Sotheby's and the designer Tom Ford.

As spectacle, "Greeting Card" was a bit thin and not as much fun as the anticipation. Assault on the senses via noise and smoke seemed to be the main point. Additionally, the event was burdened by overly familiar results: the world's largest Brice Marden painting, some spectators said; graffiti-earthwork, said others. There was also the populous history of vehicle-based art and paintings made without paintbrushes to contend with.



A dozen motorcyclists helped create Aaron Young's artwork "Greeting Card" at the Seventh Regiment Armory on Monday night.

The precedents, all operating under the sign of Pollock, include Michael Heizer (a motorcycle circling in the desert), Ulay and Abramovic (a truck circling in a courtyard) and Matthew Barney (two motorcycles circling the Isle of Wight). Richard Jackson, Rebecca Horn and Roxy Paine have all constructed machines to make paintings. Yves Klein famously used women dipped in blue paint. Andy Warhol used urine, right from the (male) source. Rudy Stingel uses museum visitors, as attested by the foil room in his current show at the Whitney Museum.

Still, a trip to the Armory, which is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, is worthwhile, partly for the majesty of the empty building itself. But the scale of Mr. Young's effort is stunning and the neon tones, achieved without neon, have a wonderful

brightness. Visitors who happened to be there Wednesday saw Mr. Young directing Wink 1100, a professional stunt rider and the lead biker, in touching up the work. The additions may have undercut the drama and randomness of the original event; a crude signature was even added ("A.Y. '07"). But the work improved, and watching Wink on his own was more exciting than watching more cyclists zoom in and out of smoke. The work was produced by the Art Production Fund with the patronage of more than a dozen private collectors, foundations and businesses, including Target, for a final cost of around \$220,000. After "Greeting Card" is dismantled on Sunday night, Mr. Young will divide its 288 panels into individual paintings ranging in size from a single panel to as many as 150. These will then begin a second life as saleable works meant to hang on walls. Perhaps they will buy Mr. Young enough time to figure out a more profound way to make paintings or other kinds of art.

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