

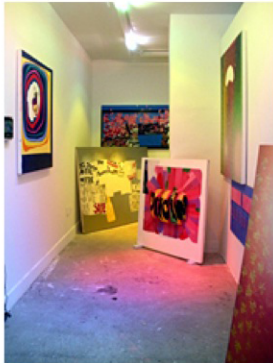
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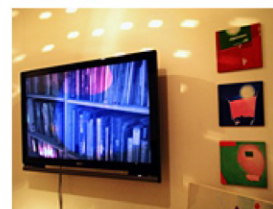
Street-level view of Rochelle Feinstein's installation, "I Made a Terrible Mistake" (2009), at the APF LAB in SoHo Mews



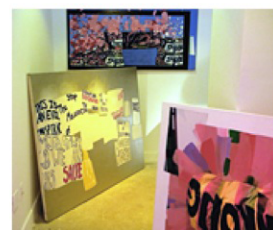
The "Michael Jackson side" of Rochelle Feinstein's "I Made a Terrible Mistake" (2009) at the APF LAB in SoHo Mews



The "Barry White side" of Rochelle Feinstein's "I Made a Terrible Mistake" (2009) at the APF LAB in SoHo Mews



Rochelle Feinstein
I Made a Terrible Mistake
installation view
2009
APF LAB



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GOTHAM ART & THEATER

by Elisabeth Kley

Rochelle Feinstein, "A Terrible Mistake"

The day after Michael Jackson dangled his baby son from a hotel balcony, he announced: "I made a terrible mistake," a remark, Rochelle Feinstein said, that immediately started her thinking about the fruitful possibilities of error. The result was a project called "I Made a Terrible Mistake," including paintings, photographs, videos, and audio -- all inspired by Jackson and by Barry White, the disco crooner who died in 2003.

A pocket-sized version of this potentially enormous installation can be seen until July 23 at APF LAB, a space donated to the Art Production Fund by Soho Mews. Eleven large paintings, three videos, three photographs, three digital prints on canvas, three disco balls, an iPod with earphones and an ailing miniature TV with a painted screen are crammed into a small storefront that is bisected by an unfinished sheet-rock wall. Works hang on walls and from the ceiling, lean against each other and sit on the floor.

Visible from the street for 24 hours a day, the exhibition is particularly effective at night. The side inspired by Jackson is illuminated by a spectrum of colored lights, and a large revolving disco ball sends reflected silver squares across the walls of the Barry White section. Light is also the subject of many of the works, such as *Mandalay Bay Ladies Room* (2005), a painting of a tiny video screen playing a movie of a band as it hangs absurdly over a roll of toilet paper in a Las Vegas hotel bathroom.

Other paintings include *Auditorium* (2004), a tempera image of a wordless marquee. An adjacent metal plaque explains that the space was originally named after Michael Jackson, but the sign was covered after he was accused of molesting a child. And *We Love You* (2004) features a depiction of protest signs on a silver background, with fragments of anti-abortion, anti-gay and anti-Iraq-war slogans jostling each other like a babble of voices without bodies.

WhiteHouse (2004) is a melancholy uninhabited video of a disco spotlight roving over shelves filled with books, as White intones in his phantom bedroom voice: "People sometimes disagree. . . . I want you to know I really didn't mean to hurt your feelings, to make you sad," coaxing an absent woman into forgiveness without ever admitting that he made a mistake. In another little video called *Dis-Gardened* (2003), some pansies ostensibly swaying in a natural breeze are actually being killed by an exhaust fan, a pathetic fate for flowers in an artificial Eden.

"The music of Barry White and Michael Jackson offered the possibility of transformation in an age of highly volatile politics," Feinstein remarks. "It was a time when everyone -- gay, straight, black, white -- could find sensual redemption by losing themselves under disco lights." In the wake of White's death and the collapse of Jackson's ersatz paradise, Feinstein's witty and poignant installation beautifully illuminates the frustrations of our imperfect lives. Prices range from \$4,000 to \$25,000.

ELISABETH KLEY is a New York artist and critic.