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Women's Artwork a Focus at the Last Brucennial

By Carmel Melouney

During a frenzied week in which the art world juggled the Armory Show on the Hudson River piers, the ADAA Art Show at the Park Avenue Armory and the Whitney Biennial on the Upper East Side, an alternative exhibition lured a huge crowd downtown to the Meatpacking district.



Attendees of the Last Brucennial showcase of works from more than 600 female artists that opened on Thursday.

Timothy Schenck

The Last Brucennial, a showcase of works from more than 600 female artists, opened on Thursday and will run from Wednesday to Sunday until April 4.

Presented by Vito Schnabel, the art dealer son of artist Julian Schnabel who directed “The Diving Bell and the Butterfly,” the event is the fifth and final installment of an alternative biennial run by the New York artist collective called the Bruce High Quality Foundation.

Mr. Schnabel said he was introduced to the group by his sister Lola, also an artist, and started working with them eight years ago after meeting several members at Cooper Union, which his sister attended.

The location for the final Brucennial, at 837 Washington Street, a recently completed commercial building next to the future site of the Whitney Museum of American Art, was appropriate because the event markets itself in direct opposition to shows like the Whitney Biennial.

Rather than a carefully curated group show, the Brucennial is intended to be a celebration of an ever-widening community of artists, both known and unknown, said Mr. Schnabel. Art works in the show range in value from \$5 to more than \$100,000.

On Thursday night, throngs of young artists and art aficionados in parkas and beanies hustled to gain entry to the opening night.

Inside the tightly packed space, Mr. Schnabel said the event was deliberately timed to coincide with the opening of the Whitney Biennial on the same night.

Actress and artists Lucy Liu is pictured at the opening of the Last Brucennial.
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“The Whitney Biennial is a show where curators pick who they think their favorite artists are at this time, but this art show is a little more democratic and encapsulates what is happening today as best as it can,” he said.

Mr. Schnabel said the Brucennial exhibited works from artists from all over the world.

“There are some things you may not like as much as others but it kind of becomes one work in itself,” he said. “You can see Louise Bourgeois or Cecily Brown or Tracey Emin or Pat Steir next to Kathryn Kerr, who people might not know now but they will soon.”

Among the works featured at the event is Hanna Linden’s Pussy Riot balaclava and Tracey Emin’s neon sign “Trust Yourself.”



Actress and artists Lucy Liu is pictured at the opening of the Last Brucennial.

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The actress Lucy Liu is exhibiting a work titled “I Had My Heart Set On You” that is valued at \$8,500. “I’ve been working on it since this summer but then we pulled it all together. It’s graphite and those color swatches are oil paint,” said Ms. Liu, who said she had been

creating art “for a while.”

Ms. Liu said it was more difficult in some ways to exhibit artworks as a well-known actress because “people really expect one thing from you.”

“It’s nice to be included in a group show. ... It is less pressure than having your own show,” said Ms. Liu, who has an upcoming solo show in Hong Kong. “It was nice to be included in this Brucennial because it’s such an incredible collection of women artists.”

Mr. Schnabel said the final Brucennial featured only female artists because “it’s a discussion in the art world.”

“We thought it was an interesting way to close out the Brucennial,” he said. “We have a lot of friends who are ladies and they were into that idea so we did it.”

Mr. Schnabel said the Bruce High Quality Foundation would now focus on its university classes.

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