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Elevator Presents Mobile Mattresses; Sausage Factory: Hot Art

By Katya Kazakina - Nov 2, 2010 12:01 AM ET

The Lower East Side is known for tiny store-front galleries, but three new exhibition spaces are bucking the trend with soaring quarters and unexpected vantage points.

The oddest venue is an elevator in Sperone Westwater gallery, designed by Norman Foster. The 12-by-20-foot room slowly moves up and down between the second and third floors while the visitors examine an installation by Argentine artist Guillermo Kuitca.

The artsy rides are not for everyone. At the opening, John McEnroe, tennis player and art collector, was in and out before the doors had a chance to close.

Inside, 54 child-size mattresses line the walls like giant tiles. Each floral or teddy-bear-stamped pad doubles as a painting surface for maps of randomly selected locations from around the world. Urban centers in Afghanistan, Poland and Scotland are linked by red and black roads winding like bloodlines.

Created in 1992, the work, "Le Sacre," looks dingy, feels creepy and sparks associations with the Holocaust's mounds of confiscated human possessions.

Kuitca's paintings hang in a double-tier room with a 27-foot ceiling. His layered imagery includes Cubist shapes, fractured maps, torn architectural diagrams and crowns of thorns.

Prices for paintings range from \$50,000 to \$500,000; "Le Sacre" is not for sale. "Guillermo Kuitca: Paintings, 2008- 2010" runs through Nov. 6 at 257 Bowery; +1-212-999-7337; <http://www.speronewestwater.com>

Aggressive Canvases

Los Angeles-based artist Matthew Chambers came up with a clever way to turn even failures into sellable 8-by-4-foot paintings.

Successful canvases depict colorful, kitschy and crudely painted images lifted from pop culture. There's a teddy bear, a cowboy, a rose, a footprint.

Unsuccessful pieces are shredded; the torn strips are reassembled into abstract compositions that bring to mind Mark Grotjahn's "butterfly" paintings and Piero Manzoni's white monochromes.

The two groups appear in Chambers's solo exhibition at Untitled gallery, a new partnership between Joel Mesler, former owner of scruffy yet savvy Rental gallery, and Carol Cohen, former staffer in London's blue-chip White Cube gallery. Untitled opened in September in a cavernous 2,300-square-foot ground-floor space on Orchard Street.

Highlighting the artist's prolific output and its own enviable dimensions, the dealers hung 33 canvases cheek by jowl around the perimeter. Three others descend from the ceiling -- lest we ignore its 22-foot height.

Paintings are \$8,000. "Matthew Chambers" runs through Dec. 12 at 30 Orchard St.; +1-212-608-6002; <http://nyuntitled.com>



Dave Cole, *Leaves of Grass*, 2010, hand-cut military shell casings with melted bullets and bullet fragments, 6 x 32 x 96 inches

Rapunzel

Art dealer Kristen Dodge thought big when she decided to open her first gallery in New York. A Boston native, she leased a 2,500-square-foot former sausage factory on Rivington Street, around the corner from the New Museum and called it Dodge Gallery.

The gallery's first solo show by Providence, Rhode Island-based sculptor Dave Cole marks an ambitious beginning. Titled "Unreal City," it alludes to the American frontier, militarism and modernist literature.

A heave of golden braids worthy of Rapunzel (but made of bronze) clings to two shotguns like yarn to spindles. Melted bullets and split shells are repurposed for models of barren landscapes in the "Leaves of Grass" series, named after Walt Whitman's poem.

The show's epicenter is a giant American flag stitched together like a quilt with impressive craftsmanship. Cole extracted all the red, white and blue from the flags of 192 countries that make up the United Nations. Colorful patches of yellow, green, red and black lay discarded on the floor.

If you stand in front of it, the flag fills your entire field of vision, transformed into a sea of mostly white and red.

Prices range from \$2,500 to \$150,000. "Unreal City" runs through Nov. 7 at 15 Rivington St.; +1-212-228-5122; <http://www.dodge-gallery.com>