

Meet Me at the Fair

By: FRANK HOLLIDAY
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SANCTUARY

Rupert Ravens Contemporary
85 Market St. at Washington St.
Newark
Thu.-Sun. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Through Dec.21
973-353-0660 or rupertravens.com

In an old furniture store -- 30,000 square feet of an old furniture store actually -- on the main shopping thoroughfare in downtown Newark a new art destination has made its grand opening. It's only 15 minutes by train from Manhattan and provides a great outlet for artists, local and international.



Work by John Wesley and Elizabeth Murray hang in the "Sanctuary" exhibition that inaugurated Rupert Ravens' new space in Newark.

The building has three floors and the exhibition space is huge. It has the feel of a renegade space and that of course offers the hope of enhancing the work it shows. The impression is a bit like PS1's in the beginning, before its MOMA makeover.

Rupert Ravens has been getting a lot of attention for his curating lately, emerging as a cultural maverick and an important art dealer. Stepping outside the Chelsea mainstream, showing work that may or may not be status quo right at the moment, Ravens is following his gut with work from artists he feels deserve attention, both established and unknown. He has plans to open a gallery in Berlin soon as well as in Asia.

Advertisement

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An advertisement for Nikon. It features a black Nikon DSLR camera with a lens attached in the foreground. The background is a scenic landscape of rolling green hills under a blue sky, with a dirt road leading towards a cluster of tall, thin cypress trees. The Nikon logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the ad.

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NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. Ends 01/31/08.

Ravens is diligent in attending the art fairs that have become the financial backbone of art commerce today and has planned large-scale shows that offer many artists great opportunity while opening doors to a diverse community that don't know quite what to think.

"Sanctuary," the show that Ravens presented to open his new space on October 26, allowed him to do so with great fanfare, with Newark's Malcolm X Shabazz High School Marching Drum Corps Band outside, the Lil' Bastard Blues Band upstairs, and the roving performance artist Clarina Bezzola doing her thing in the main gallery. It truly was an event.

There are seventy-four artist-exhibited works on the first and second floors and the Rutgers Brodsky Center shows print selections in the basement.

Artists -- including Agnes Denes, James Andrew Brown, John Wesley, Mike Howard, Donald Traver, Elizabeth Murray, Loren Munk, Vija Celmins, Stefanie Nagorka, Lee Ellis, Steve McKenzie, Ruth Marshall, Mona Brody, and Jose Camacho, to name just some -- contribute to the stunning success of the show.

The effect is grand and exciting, with each artist given enough space, without falling back on a salon-style hanging overkill. Installations, paintings, photos, abstract, conceptual all worked together to make a statement about art -- not what it looks like, but the commonalities of spirit underneath art-making itself.

I hope people will check this out, see the work online and at fairs, and support these kinds of out-of-the-mainstream endeavors. They open up space and attention for artists of all types -- and that's a good thing.