

Kenny Schachter

words EMMA TURNBULL

'You should do whatever the hell you want,' says the outspoken yet insanely passionate New York gallerist, curator, collector and artist, Kenny Schachter. 'What interests me is when people stop being safe and so predictable. Nobody expresses their opinions about anything. Not even the critics. People are petrified'.

It's this offbeat and outside-the-perimeter take on art that has fuelled his effervescent career. During the 1980s and 1990s, Schachter held many exhibitions of work by unknown and sometimes disregarded artists, converting disused shops into temporary gallery spaces. The opening of his first permanent gallery last year in New York reflects his repelled stance on the now mainstay white cube and the cliquy attitudes he sees as surrounding it.

'It's very clinical, it's all about economics and a certain hierarchy. White walls and a cement floor have, over time, become anything but neutral. I guess, in a sense, I'm kind of more cynical, but I'm idealistically cynical, because I like to reach out to a broader base of people in the hope that it impacts in a small, grass roots way'.

Schachter's conTEMPorary gallery has gone against the grain, intending to be welcoming and in no way intimidating. An obscure interior of aluminium walls, anti-cube curves, protruding display shelves and metal meshes make up the setting. With huge praise for the British art scene, Schachter hopes to open a space in London in the near future. In particular, Manchester is held in high regard; after holding a show at The International 3 in 2001, Schachter was, 'amazed by the vibrancy of the scene, the vitality of the artists, and the freshness of the art. The sense of people working together, looking out and caring for one another was palpable.'

Entitled *How Much? The History of Young British Art*, the opening show at conTEMPorary, an opinionated series of gaudy economic portraits of YBAs boiled down the art world to an essence only of money. For the October programme this year, Schachter has returned to using a temporary space to exhibit early work from the 1960s to the 1980s by Vito Acconci, the renowned sculptor whose architecture company designed conTEMPorary. In November the gallery will present work by Rosalie Knox in her first solo show - a series of cheeky style, culture and fashion photographs and party people documentaries, while upstairs there will be a show by painter Catherine Bernard. Often working with people exterior to the art world frame, from fashion and music to dance and architecture, Schachter furthers his commendable commitment to broadening art knowledge. 'Part of the reason I work with music and fashion people is that it brings a new constituency to the gallery, almost by default'. This cross-pollination between practices is fruitful, extending art boundaries. 'Good art is good art, it's impossible to define, and it happens when you least expect it'.

conTEMPorary is at 14 Charles Lane (Westside Highway), New York.



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