

# The New York Times

## Brucennial 2012

by Ken Johnson  
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What is the Brucennial? The announcement on the Web site of its organizers, the anonymous members of the Bruce High Quality Foundation and Vito Schnabel, calls it: "The single most important art exhibition in the history of the world. Ever." This impudent hyperbole leads you to wonder: Is the Brucennial 2012 (with its tag line "Harderer. Betterer. Fasterer. Strongerer.") a joke? A madcap exercise in Relational Aesthetics? An Occupy-style protest against the New York art establishment and its carefully groomed exhibitions like the Whitney Biennial and the New Museum Triennial – both on view now?

You might view the jampacked, multifloor installation of works by close to 400 artists as a populist, radically inclusive survey of what artists in New York are really creating outside the filtering systems of galleries, museums and curators. It seems, for example, that many are making paintings. In salon-style, floor-to-ceiling hangings you will find every conceivable kind of two-dimensional creativity:

Minimalist monochromes; Color Field stained canvases; finely and loosely grained patterning; cartoon allegories and sensitively observed still lifes. Quality, it must be noted, is extremely inconsistent. There are wonderful things, dumb things and inexplicable things. Three-dimensional work is similarly pluralistic and uneven. There is a smattering of videos.

Despite the inclusion of works by well-known artists like Cindy Sherman, Ron Gorchov and Jean-Michel Basquiat, the show feels driven mainly by the energies of M.F.A.-degreed strivers, hardly any of whom would turn down an opportunity to show in a Chelsea gallery. Like a commercial art fair, the exhibition is fun and exhilarating at first, then the diversity and quantity are numbing and, finally, depressing. So who is truly served by the Brucennial? The answer is clear: no one is cooler than the Bruce High Quality Foundation.