

The NYC Exhibition Where Works Cost up to \$75

Project Art Distribution's roving shows exuberantly defy the established art world order.



Louis Bury November 16, 2022



Installation View of "In with the Old: Nearly Six Years of Project Art Distribution" (all images courtesy of the Yeh Art Gallery, St. John's University, Queens; all photographs by Philip Hinge)

A flea market bounty of art creates a lively mood throughout ***In With the Old: (Nearly) Six Years of Project Art Distribution***, curated by Sophia Ma and Emily Janowick, at St. John's University's Dr. M.T. Geoffrey Yeh Art Gallery. Colorful, mostly pint-sized works populate the gallery's walls, shelves, and floor. A mock-heroic row of imitation Statue of Liberty souvenirs — including one fabricated from rubber bands (Topher Lineberry, "Rubberbandwidth," 2021) and another from lint (Peter Hoffmeister, "Liberty Lint," 2021) — encapsulates the exhibition's material variety

and irreverent spirit. A plastic Starbucks cup caked in cement, Erik Sommer's "Cement Iced Grande Soy Mocha" (2020), registers a sense of consumer alienation. Bookshelves brimming with zines and chapbooks, from small presses such as Wendy's Subway and Cassandra Press, recall the plucky DIY atmosphere of art book fairs.

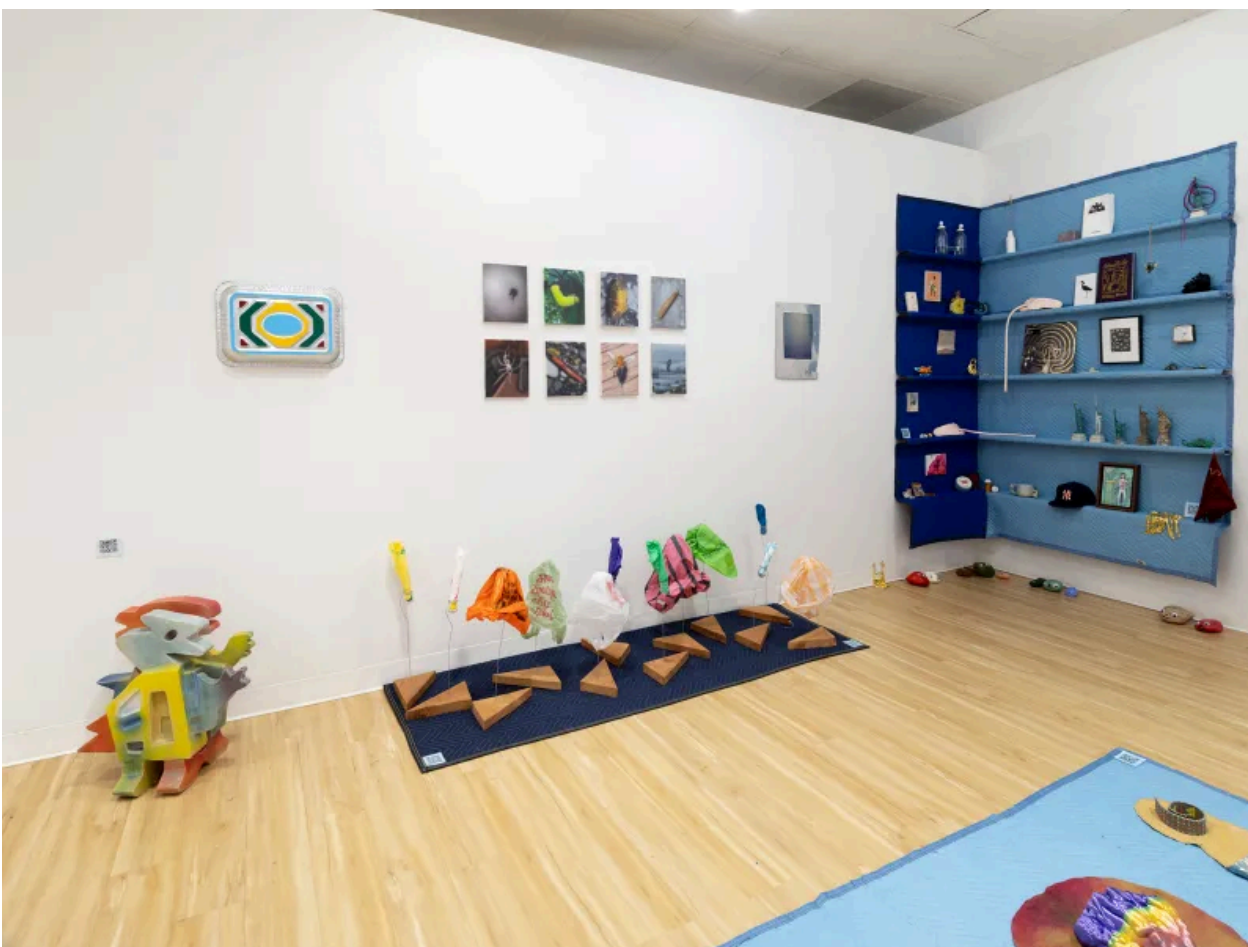
The exhibition breezily surveys the first five-plus years of Project Art Distribution, P.A.D. for short, a roving project space that collaboratively organizes one-day pop-up exhibitions on the sidewalks of New York City's Soho. Though P.A.D.'s exhibitions ordinarily take place outdoors, exposed to the elements and the public, a sense of openness comes across in the gallery setting. The moving pads laid out on the floor, used in the pop-up sidewalk displays as a scrappy workaround to renting expensive commercial real estate, make the exhibition feel down to earth; they constitute a demotic display method that's in keeping with the project's relatively affordable price policy (most works in the exhibition are for sale and cost \$75 or less). The artworks themselves, from Alex Schmidt's ceramic figurines with accompanying body positivity mantras ("Follow the pleasure," 2021; "A voyeur that you're an exhibitionist for," 2021) to Alison Kuo's toy-bathtub-turned-zany-shrine ("My Favorite Thing," 2019), remain unconcerned with received ideas about what art ought to be or do, and often manage to feel utilitarian even when they're purely decorative.



Installation View of "In with the Old: Nearly Six Years of Project Art Distribution"

Previous versions of *In With the Old* were billed as retrospectives and shown at The Walters Art Museum (2021–22) and SUNY Purchase’s Richard and Dolly Maass Gallery (2022). But the “retrospective” label feels too institutional for an exhibition that, like P.A.D. itself, is temperamentally closer to a manifesto: an exuberant declaration of artistic values that defies the established order. Indeed, the Yeh Gallery’s 38-page-long checklist of artworks is so effusive that it’s practically an art **book in its own right**. Several well-known artist names appear on the list, which may grant the exhibition credibility in some viewers’ eyes, but questions of status and reputation feel beside the point. When it comes to the decision of **whether** to buy an artwork, and why, P.A.D. lowers the financial and career stakes to the point where the main questions pertain to pleasure.

The “Nearly Six Years” in the exhibition’s subtitle alludes to Lucy Lippard’s seminal 1973 book on Conceptual Art, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object*. The allusion situates P.A.D. in a lineage of projects that propose — with irony or sincerity — structural alternatives to art’s hyper-commodification. David Hammons’s “Bliz-aard Ball Sale” (1983), in which the artist sold snowballs on a downtown Manhattan sidewalk, is a key historical influence, as is the 1980s leftist collective Political Art Documentation/Distribution, co-founded by Lippard and many others. P.A.D.’s playful wares and welcoming ethos continue this vital tradition, making clear how art’s means of distribution go a long way toward determining what kind of work gets made.



Installation View of “In with the Old: Nearly Six Years of Project Art Distribution”

In With the Old: (Nearly) Six Years of Project Art Distribution *continues at Dr. M.T. Geoffrey Yeh Art Gallery, St. John's University (Sun Yat Sen Memorial Hall, St. John's University, 8000 Utopia Parkway, Jamaica, Queens) through December 10. The exhibition was curated by Emily Janowick and Sophia Ma, with the support of Owen Duffy, Director, Yeh Art Gallery.*

© 2025 Hyperallergic