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**Weekend**

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ART REVIEW

### The Hamptons, A Playground for Creativity

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SOUTHAMPTON, N.Y.

"North Fork/South Fork: East End Art Now," an exhibition at the Parrish Art Museum here, celebrates artists who reside seasonally or permanently in the area around what is popularly known as the Hamptons. Organized by the Parrish's curator, Alicia Longwell, with help from the independent curator and critic Klaus Kertess, this uneven but pleasantly innocuous show includes many well-known figures: Ross Bleckner, John Chamberlain, Chuck Close, Eric Fischl, Barbara Kruger and David Salle, among others.

Part 1 of the survey, on view here earlier in the summer, had a similarly luminous roster, with work by Vija Celmins, Robert Gober, April Gornik, Malcolm Morly and Elizabeth Peyton (who also organized a small artist's choice exhibition of works from the Parrish's collection).

As Ms. Longwell tells the story in her catalog essay, Long Island's bifurcated East End has been attracting artists since the late 1870s, when a group of artists calling themselves the Tiling Club (they painted tiles in the winter) ventured here for a highly successful sketching expedition. In 1891, the American academician William Merritt Chase established the Shinnecock Hills Summer School of Art, the nation's first school of plein-air painting.

During World War II European refugees like André Breton and Max Ernst spent time in the Hamptons. After the war the area was still sufficiently undeveloped that an impecunious artist couple like Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner could afford to buy property, enabling Pollock to escape the pressures of the city, stop drinking and produce his breakthrough drip paintings.

The list of artists who have sojourned on the East End from the 1950s on is long and varied. It includes Willem de Kooning, Fairfield Porter, Larry Rivers and Frank Stella among many others. The artists selected by Ms. Longwell and Mr. Kertess are also a varied lot. They range in age from around 30 to around 80, and the styles represented are correspondingly wide ranging. The show includes works of painterly realism, photography-based painting, postmodernist image appropriation, funky sculpture, video projections and more.

Disappointingly, it all adds up to something less than the sum of its parts. There are some substantial works: a large, photo-based portrait of the painter Lisa Yuskavage by Mr. Close; a fluttery sculptural abstraction made of crumpled, candy-colored auto body metal by Mr. Chamberlain; and a poured-paint diptych by Joe Zucker that is composed of a black monochrome rectangle over a schematic image of a schooner. A fountain made of blobby cast metal by Lynda Benglis has a nice grotesquely organic presence; and a field of wiggly green lines on a hot pink ground by Sue Williams is sexy and optically captivating. But these are absorbed into a generally leveling, pluralistic hodgepodge.

Outdoors on the lawn a cartoonish sculpture of an angel who has crashed to earth, an installation by Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, is momentarily diverting. So is Tony Oursler's fake meteorite with a grotesque face video-projected onto it: installed just outside the front door to the museum, it speaks in a rumbling, comically scary voice, warning: "Walk away! Turn around and walk away! It may be your last chance!"

Back inside other electrically animated works include an assemblage of colored neon lights and a metal ladder by Keith Sonnier; continuously running surfing movies by Michael Halsband; and Donald Moffett's video image of

the Ramble in Central Park – a historically gay cruising spot – projected on a metallic paint-coated canvas to mildly intriguing illusionistic effect.

Traditionalists include **Billy Sullivan**, whose nude and still-life paintings are made with deft, Bonnardian seriousness; Robert Harms, who renders yellow heliotrope blossoms with a heavy painterly hand; and Jane Wilson, whose expansive, dark blue seascape approaches Rothko-esque abstraction.

Despite portentously dour paintings by Mr. Bleckner and Mr. Fischl, the show has a generally cheerful feeling. This is enhanced by Mary Heilmann's bright, brusquely made abstract painting and colorful homemade deck chair, and by Tony Just's painting of radiating green stripes with the hand-painted words "Celebrate Trees" written over them.

Leave it to Ms. Kruger, then, to disrupt the holiday mood. She contributes a large, close-up color photograph of a snarling, sharp-toothed jaguar. Across it runs a line of white-on-red type that reads, "Another artist. Another exhibition. Another gallery. Another magazine. Another review. Another career. Another life."

The effect, if you give it much thought, is to shift your perspective from the high plane of fine art to the terrestrial level of sociology: from art as an inspirational secular religion to art as a profane and potentially soul-eroding business.

At first you might think, lucky Ms. Kruger, who can spend her summers in the Springs area of East Hampton while teaching in California the rest of the year, and complain about an art world that has made it possible for her to enjoy such a lifestyle. Then you may thank Ms. Kruger for introducing a refreshingly irritating dose of reality and thereby awakening you, indirectly at least, to the biggest elephant in the room: real estate.

If the exhibition had a more coherent purpose and a stronger artistic impact, if it tried to do something more than just puff artists fortunate enough to be able to live in such a paradise, your thoughts might not turn in that direction. But given the nature of the place in question – a place of great natural beauty, certainly, but a place, too, where, at certain times of the year, wealth, power and celebrity become notoriously concentrated—it is hard not to think about property: who has it, how they got it, what it's worth.

In the catalog, there is a photograph of another work by Ms. Kruger, a site-specific piece that she produced at the Parrish in 1998. Across the upper range of the museum's Romanesque façade she placed stark red letters that read, "You belong here." Below, on columns separating three arched entry portals, stacked letters spelled "Money" and "Taste."

The sly ambiguity of that piece still resonates. While invoking the ideal of democratic openness on which American museums and American society in general are supposedly founded, it reminds you of where in particular you are: in Southampton, whose inhabitants include some who are wealthy beyond the wildest dreams of most people, a place where not all will feel that they truly belong.

An exhibition that inquired deeply and fearlessly into the place of art and artists in such a setting would be something to see.