

ARTFORUM

Collateral

by David Lewis
July 12, 2009



View of "Collatéral," 2009.

"Collatéral" brings together the work of eight artists (Liz Deschenes, Sam Lewitt, Scott Lyall, Sean Paul, Eileen Quinlan, Blake Rayne, Nora Schultz, and Cheyney Thompson) who identify, perhaps to an unusual degree, as a group. (Five of them share a New York gallery: Miguel Abreu.) Granted, they have individual practices. But the initial impression for viewers is likely to be of cogent collective identity—a shared refinement and technical precision, as well as a ubiquitous coolness of tone.

Collectivity is reinforced by the elegant, self-referential installation. The large main wall has, for instance, been covered floor to ceiling with works, thus functioning almost as a single coherent statement (or piece). A video playing in an opposite corner features a scrolling text about the show, written by Gareth James in the guise of Storm Van Helsing, which foregrounds the question of collective identity. "Why is it, we ought to ask, that people get together as groups?" asks Van Helsing. No answer is provided. Instead, the text takes the observer on a theoretical tour, only then to rephrase the question: "Why is it, we ought to ask, that people get un-together as groups?" Each of these artists uses his or her medium to question the myths, assumptions, and procedures associated with that medium, so that the signifier art is, ideally, replaced with "art" or even "art?" In "Collatéral," paintings about painting and photographs about photography combine to create a group show about the question of the group show.