

BULLETT

MAMA Gallery's Inaugural ERECTION Brings Actual Art to LA's Art District
December 15, 2014 4:36 pm By Lindsay Maharry

"It's an incredibly exciting time," said Adarsha Benjamin, the vibrant face of LA gallery MAMA at Saturday's reception for their inaugural exhibition ERECTION. Hot off November's soft opening of "The Holy Other," Jena Malone's first photo show documenting her time in Myanmar, and Basel success with a pool-side Ryan Heffington performance, MAMA is spearheading a blooming contemporary art scene in the industrial sprawl of LA's Art District. "I know a lot of our neighbors are very happy we're bringing arts to the Art District. Obviously, there are a lot of art galleries in Downtown. But Art District proper, there are only us, The Box, and a couple other smaller galleries like CES. It feels like we're making use of a neighborhood that was originally dedicated to art in the first place."

ERECTION opened Saturday to a packed house, a great party. Installations manipulating the divide between realism and fantasy utilized different components of the raw, expansive warehouse. "We curated 15 artists in total in the show. Everybody's piece is related to the space in some way or another, whether it be the architecture, whether it be the surrounding areas, or the color or the temperament or the emotion. Everyone has a different reason for their piece or how it relates to the gallery itself. Even the sound piece that we're playing, done by Joe McKee, is all sounds that were recorded in the building, playing the walls, playing the pipes. Everything is related."

LA's cultural elite encountered 4,000 square feet of electric environments. A room of Mattia Bagi's tar arrangements flowered from live grass. In Alia Penner's Venus Rising, a plaster goddess spun slowly, suspended by hundreds of balloons. Photographer Amanda Charchain's enclave, transformed with black sand and colorful geodes, mimicked her photos confronting the bounds of nudity 74 stories below ground New Mexico's Carlsbad Caverns. Lola Rose Thompson's flower installations were fun and depressing. Devendra Banhart hid paintings throughout the gallery.

Past a winding line for cheap red wine and moonshine where loaded jokes bounced around the crowd (overheard: "the ultimate sustainable performance art piece would be to kill yourself" "it's been done dude.. Van Gogh!" "wasn't he murdered" "fuck it, want a bump?"), pop artist James Georgopolous video installation Vacation solely occupied a massive back room filled with cigarette smoke. A suspended silver cab of a 1968 Ford F250 played a cross-country drive filmed in entirety, with a nine minute loop used for this show.

MAMA represents a bright future for a burgeoning underground in a city that has never been more artistically relevant. See ERECTION through January 24th. Gallery open Tuesday through Saturday at 1242 Palmetto St.