

Interview



WHAT'S IN A YEAR?

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How to look back on a year in New York's super-saturated art world? With a strong point of view. Tomorrow, the city's oldest alternative non-profit art space, White Columns, is offering one. "Looking Back," this year's aptly titled iteration of their popular annual retrospective, reflects on 2012 through the eyes of 36-year-old Richard Birkett, curator of Soho's storied non-profit Artists Space. The exhibition will present Birkett's personal selections from a year's worth of gallery visits and exhibition openings, from Jason Simon's emotional August memorial for Chris Marker outside of Light Industry to Martin Beck's enigmatic November "Presentation" installation at 47 Canal.

The project, which Birkett signed onto in December 2011, required retrospection in real time. "You're kind of looking throughout the year with half a mind on the fact that you're curating a show based on what you're seeing, constantly, at the end of the year," Birkett recalls of his process. The end result is inevitably idiosyncratic.

Birkett admits, "Everyone has a different take on what's interesting, what people are doing, and what the core concerns are that artists are responding to." What he found himself returning to were issues of re-presentation: "I'm naturally quite interested in work that's project-based, and sometimes quite context-specific," Birkett offers. "The idea of the annual being that you see something and then you re-present it in another show several months down the line, it opens up this gap between the ways in which we encounter art and experience art in different contexts, which makes it quite an interesting problem to deal with."

It was a practical challenge as much as an intellectual one. "There ended up being a lot of work in the show that actually necessitated being slightly remade for the project," Birkett explains. This problem of re-presentation—the reimagining involved in recollecting such subjective and contextual work—promises to make this seventh installment of the White Columns Annual something of a first.