



## Studio Tour unites locals and stars

This year's event offers no less than 97 artists from around the world

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ART

If ambition were the only standard, this year's edition of "Open Doors Studio Tour 2006" the annual Newark studio cruise and related art exhibitions, would already be a rave success.

The event is intended to bring prestigious art world names and galleries into Newark and set them cheek-by-jowl with the city's own downtown art scene to jump-start cross-pollination and give both the art and the city 21st century validation.

Guest curator Rupert Ravens is back, this time in the Newark National Building, organizing a sprawling, 6th-floor exhibition of 97 artists from Newark, Brooklyn, Belgium, Germany, and many places in between called "Newark Between Us" through Dec. 17.

The show mixes long-time, well-known Newark artists like Bisa Washington, Willie Cole, Emma Wilcox, Ujima Kuumba Majied, Victor Davson and Stephen McKenzie with appearances by art stars like Yoko Ono, Jasper Johns, Nancy Spero and the late Leon Golub and Philip Guston. In addition, some 29 artists on the event's studio tour have been gathered together, organized by Yoland Skeete of Newark's Sumei Interdisciplinary Center, in a first-floor gallery through Nov. 16 also at the Newark National Building. The overall event includes a Gallery Crawl, featuring 16 downtown art galleries and the Newark Museum from 5-10 p.m. tonight.

Part of what the artists are doing is helping to advertise downtown real estate. (Last year the nearly empty office tower at 1 Washington Park Ravens filled with a floor of art was quickly rented out after the show closed.) As Ravens says, it's enough "to make you think what we could do if we had a real budget. ... We're getting world-class contributions to this show all for less than \$10,000. It's because Newark is ready to really come back. People really want this place to succeed."

The opening reception for "Newark Between Us," at 6 p.m. Sunday, is probably the moment to judge whether the show lives up to its intention to bring out the "nature of relationships between people."

The National Building is a lovely pre-war pile, and the floor-through gallery space naturally breaks up into sections -- this part for paintings, this for art installations, and an "invention section" full of gadgets and gizmos with art applications, like Mark Andreas' "Hanging Balance," a tripod-like machine with an ice cube at its center.

You will need to see this show to appreciate it. Grace Graupe Pillard's paintings -- her husband on a respirator and a portrait of a woman stoned to death for sleeping with a relative in Afghanistan -- start the painting section off at a high level. Alexandra Pacula's urban night scenes more than keep pace, and Carl Hazlewood's African-influenced "Decorator Series: Across" scans a Newark sensibility.

Many of the pieces here echo Graupe Pillard's note of political protest. Newark painter German Pitre has created a tar-smearred black room with a bed and a tarry American flag; Eileen Weitzman is showing clownishly Surreal free-standing figures made from fabric, stuffed animals, and war photos called "Outer Space Meeting of the Nonaligned Empires;" James A. Brown has laid out a Hurricane Katrina memorial like a train set.

We could continue like this for a long time -- you'll see here the first Willie Cole exhibit in his hometown for 16 years; another twisted auto tire piece by fellow noted Newarker Chakaia Booker; a wonderful wall-sized

pattern print made of handguns and police body outlines by the Newark Museum's Stephen McKenzie. All this silted in among the Yoko Ono "mend piece" and Leon Golub's picture of political silence.

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