

HYPERALLERGIC

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“MY OWN CAREER BORES ME”: MARK FLOOD ON HIS GALLERY EXPERIMENT

by Samuel Johnson



Mark Flood's new gallery, located on West 22nd Street.

Mark Flood Resents was an artist-run gallery, showroom, exhibition space, hangout, and crash pad where nothing was for sale. The space was intended to lenfuse the art world and to showcase young artists. The Artforum ads were perplexing, the space never stated exactly what it was, it changed and adapted as time went on. Artworks were scattered around, propped on pallets and hung on the walls. In Miami, the exhibition took place in an extravagantly derelict empty storefront in South Beach a few blocks from the ocean. An entourage of artists, some collectors, and a dealer or two sat around on beat up old furniture.

Mark Flood has a knack for generating hype, and the pop-up was unquestionably hip, but there was something beyond that. Something very genuine happened at the space that may have had something to do with the work not being for sale. There were a lot of artists around talking, engaging, and exchanging ideas. No one seemed to care who was there, or who was important. It was a social experiment in which every person who walked into Mark Flood Resents became a lab rat being studied — including Mark Flood. Conversations and exchanges about art seemed to tie and hold everything together. It was a bit of a madhouse, a grungy punk rock scene, a space where everything and nothing seemed to be art.

Samuel Jablon: Could you talk about the intentions behind Mark Flood Resents?

Mark Flood: My gallery came out of an awkward situation. I was always sending collectors and dealers to check out the studios of artists I thought were great. But often, there wasn't much art to see, because I'd already bought it all!

Occasionally, it got pretty ugly, with the collectors cursing me and the dealers trying to insult me by saying I was a dealer too. I tried being generous, leaving a few morsels behind as I consumed everything in my path like a cloud of locusts, but I'm just too selfish.

So I decided to have a gallery in Chelsea where I could show people what art I was buying, and let them do the math, and the hunt, on their own.

I considered trying to do a little dealing on the side, but I thought I might be accused of Flipping. As you know, that's the new pariah category, rapidly rising up the who-do-we-hate charts, currently somewhere between child molesting and terrorism. I didn't want to be attacked by angry mobs of artworld do-gooders so I didn't commit the great evil of selling any of the art.

SJ: People are opposed to quick art flippers, they have a bad rap. To me it seems like there was something more going on in your space. Could you talk about it?

MF: I think it's a war about who gets to decide what is art history. Academics are pissed off that moneyed collectors are bypassing them. Other artists are the ones who really decide, but no one's betting on that horse.

SJ: There seems to be a community of artists that you support and encourage. What is the importance of this artistic community to your practice?

MF: The existing support system seems like a CIA operation to destroy young artists' creativity, so I thought I might intervene in a few cases. It's both a pain and a joy. My own career bores me, and I find their struggles amusing. It's like going to your kids' games.

I like to simulate an art underground to contextualize my own activities, since the real underground has been sprayed with weed killer. A huge paid entourage is ideal for these purposes.

SJ: How did you choose the artists?

MF: They are all artists I collect. There's a lot of Houston people; I live there. And lots of New York City people because I visit. I left out people in my collection who have gotten big because they might be embarrassed.

SJ: Was there a theme to the exhibitions?

MF: The first show, Art Wood, was my current assistants, Dylan Roberts, Lane Hagood, Arika Herreshoff, Guillaume Gelot, and Ryan Storm. Then I did some almost solo shows, like El Franco Lee and Brandon Araujo, but I always left a lot of other people's art hanging around.

In November I did a mainly women artist show called Irrational Women, with Ana Villagomez, Jackie Harris, Susie Rosmarin, and Sharon Engelstein.

The December show in Miami was the sequel, Emotionally Unavailable Men, with Chris Bexar, Paul Kremer, John Champion, and Bonnie Banks.

There was a lot of other people's art randomly included, especially Cole Mohr, Brad Troemel, Chris Cascio, Michael Bevilacqua, and Tommy Malekoff.

Every show got a weird and hard-to-understand Artforum ad, so we could maintain the right balance between people being slightly interested and somewhat confused.

The Miami Beach show was in my Miami Beach studio, but the New York shows were in Chelsea, next-door to Zach Feuer. My main concern was that my staff would be bored out of their minds so I put in sofa and chairs and two mattresses and a fridge so it could be more of a hangout. This was fairly successful, and many visitors thought they had accidentally wandered into a residence.

There's a fairly good Tumblr with a lot of the art work, and a sort of half-assed Instagram.

I also had a live feed from 4 cameras going onto a site. Visit it if you want to see a lot of people doing nothing at a gallery that's now over!

SJ: So nothing at Mark Flood Resents is for sale?

MF: No. But feel free to try me.

SJ: What type of work do you collect?

MF: When the art activity feels like the real struggles of a fucked up soul, instead of some normaloid doing homework from art school.

SJ: I walked into your space in Chelsea a few months ago, and I had absolutely no idea what was going on. I assumed people were living in the space, and that it was a type of social intervention. How was your Chelsea space received by the gallery-hoppers?

MF: I was a thousand miles away and I didn't really pay much attention to the reaction. Sometimes I watched the live feeds. The gallerinos weren't very communicative. I know some big deal people came through, and lots of kids.

Art world processes are mostly invisible.

Mark Flood Resents took place from July–December 2014 at 633 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach, and 548 West 22nd Street in New York.