

Interview

ARTS WILD NIGHT OUT



Small, Rachel. "Art's Wild Night Out," *Interview*. July 17, 2013.

albertz benda

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Quiet nights at home aren't of interest to curator Thorsten Albertz, who wore a tee shirt with "Ibiza" written in a pink font when we met him a few weeks ago at 9 a.m. He's enthralled with the dark mystery and magic of nightlife. When Albertz discovered artists whose work captures nightlife's thrilling spirit, he got the idea for a show exploring the experience of parties, evocatively called "And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music" (a quotation attributed to, surprisingly enough, Nietzsche).

The show opened yesterday at Friedman Benda and features a wide range of artistic styles; but parties, and their overindulgence, inspired each piece in some way. "I wanted to bring the show to the moment of excess—when partying turns almost hedonistic," says Albertz, who flew in two Ibizan drag queen friends for the opening reception, during which they handed out wristbands for the after-party at Le Bain at the cost of a kiss. "It's about the idea of abandoning societal conventions for a couple of hours—just allowing yourself to not be the same person that you are during the daytime," he continues.

The exhibition is divided conceptually between those who who indulge in the revelry and those who take the stance of voyeurs. "There is the artist who is a participant and takes the experience of excessive partying as a source of inspiration, as well as the artist who is a little bit more withdrawn, steps back, and is actually more an observer," explains Albertz.

Agathe Snow, who hosted *Stamina: Gloria et Patria*, a 96-hour long dance marathon at the 2008 Whitney Biennial, falls on the former side. For this exhibit, Snow created a disjointed, floor-to-ceiling disco ball sculpture. "There's a tackiness to it, but at the same time there's something so romantic about it," she offers. "It creates a zone with light... without light, it's just a ball. The people shine better, I think."

Other artworks touch on different sets of nightlife, from sex to celebrations to more, weirder sex. There's Wolfgang Tillmans' unambiguously titled self-portrait *Spitting on Dick* and Cecily Brown's *12 works on paper*, which studies fellatio from various angles. The large scale sepia oil painting *DISCO 2012* by Florian Süssmayr looks like an aesthetically elegant orgy, where ethereal figures painted in white dance around an indefinite space on the canvas.

We asked a drag queen in a pink wig, Miss Caelum, whose name is Latin for "heaven," her thoughts on the show's message. "Where I'm from, in Ibiza, it's anything goes. It's partygoers, it's everything. It's people that want to have fun, and forget about their day-to-day life." Is Albertz achieving that? "Yeah! That's right!" she said with an adamant nod.

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