

# DAILYSERVING

an international forum for the contemporary visual arts

August 3, 2010

Tags: [Curators](#), [Installation](#), [New York City](#), [Photography](#), [PPOW](#)

## [This Time with Feeling: Young Curators, New Ideas III at P-P-O-W.](#)



Bryan Graf, Lake Accumulation 2010, c-print, 13 x 19 inches- Curator, Kate Greenberg & Hilary Schaffner

I love how far the term “curate” has fallen. Once particular to egg-headed museum types who cared for collections of rarities, now curating, [at least in marketing terms](#), means nothing more than making a kind of fancy or personalized choice. Instead of plain old dinner and a movie, you can now curate the best locavorian burger and artisanal fries while selecting a companion film from your finely tuned Netflix queue.

In the art world, strains of this populist streak were found in Roberta Smith’s recent assail against New York museums’ predilection toward chilly post-minimalism. Coining the term “[curator’s art](#),” Smith called into question the blitz of retrospectives of artists like [Roni Horn](#), [Robert Smithson](#), and [Gabriel Orozco](#) that as she put it, “share a visual austerity and coolness of temperature that are dispiritingly one-note.” She added that while she liked these shows, she also wants to see shows by artists whose work belies an intense personal necessity. I took this to mean that she wants to see the same level of passion on museum walls that some employ in everyday decisions such as where to eat.

With this criteria in mind, I judged [Young Curators, New Ideas III](#) to mostly be heading in the right direction. Each curator or curatorial team was given their own section of the gallery that they treated like an individual show. The overall result looks like your average M.F.A. Thesis exhibition, but there were a couple of standouts.



Bryan Graf, *An Encyclopedia of Gardening*, 1969-2010, two panels of hardcover book covers, 24 x 32 inches each - Curator, Kate Greenberg & Hilary Schaffner

*Broken Lattice*, featuring the work of Bryan Graf, curated by Kate Greenberg and Hilary Schaffner, feels both cohesive and well varied. Graf uses a multitude of photographic techniques to convey a distant sense of place and memory. He borrows heavily from the [James Welling](#) playbook, but it's OK, as his intention feels pure and the curators seem humble. The works are given just enough space to breathe easily and the relaxed pace of the installation is completely in sync with the laid-back vibe of Graf's photography. You can get lost in a floor piece, peer into a smaller work, and lean over a table of seemingly found snapshots—in total, a satisfying experience.



Jan Tichy, *Installation No. 5 (Threshold)* 2008, three-channel digital video projection, one hundred 250g white paper objects, variable dimensions- Curator, Gabriella Hiatt

Another respite from the competing voices in this show was Jan Tichy's *Installation No. 5 (Threshold)*, curated by Gabriella Hiatt. Here, four walls of a darkened gallery are adorned with common cardboard tubes and cylindrical lids. After languishing in the dark for a while, the walls are blasted with rectangles of projected white light that transforms the tubes into what looks like the austere post-minimal abstraction of, say, [Gabriel Orozco](#). Then a layer of black lines snake onto these objects and transforms them once again. Although it's a bit theatrical, I like how the references in this work slip between DIY craft, high abstraction, mapping, and biological systems.



The rest of *Young Curators/ New Ideas III* feels a bit scattered. Some of the work that I liked, such as [Victor Vaughn's](#) digital prints, suffered from bad placement and odd context. Too much of the other work on view bears the heavy influence of grad school obsessions like [Marcel Broodthaers](#), [Felix Gonzáles-Torres](#) and [Christian Marclay](#). While it is difficult to know whom to blame for the less successful parts of the show, the artist or the curator, in the best installations it feels as if the curator simply placed the work into a complimentary context and then got out of the way.

Maybe all of the hardworking museum curators out there are over-thinking it. For instance, we shouldn't need to read a laborious wall label to experience great art. Although *Young Curators, New Ideas III* misses in parts, it spares us from heady essays and shows how selection, placement, and juxtaposition can go a long way.