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Friends Indeed | New Shows at Salon 94 Bowery and the Hole

[CULTURE](#) | BY MARINA CASHDAN | JUNE 13, 2012 9:00 AM

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An installation shot of "Pothole" at Salon 94. At center left, Huma Bhabha's sculpture.

“They’re like cave paintings,” Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn said during the installation of the group show “Pothole” that opened at one of her two downtown galleries, Salon 94 Bowery, last week. “We were all inspired by Werner Herzog’s film,” she said, half joking, and adding that initially the show was to be called “Square Cave,” a reference to the both the physical space (a subterranean white box on the Bowery) and the 10 participating artists’ inclination toward gestural, expressionistic mark-making in their practices.

Even while the name “Square Cave” did not stick, the artists in the show — including David Altmejd, Huma Bhabha, Joe Bradley, Jules de Balincourt, Jason Fox, Daniel Hesidence, Sarah Lucas, Julie Mehretu, Sterling Ruby and Dana Schutz — represent a loose clan, generationally, aesthetically and socially. They are all “either friends or fans of everyone’s work,” said Bhabha, who initially suggested the show to Greenberg Rohatyn. “I imagined the show as a square cave filled with paintings and sculptures that grapple with 30,000 years of information,” explained Bhabha, who sees all the work in the context of ancient mark-making filtered through a wide variety of more contemporary lenses like politics, street art and popular culture.

Bhabha’s towering figure, made from Styrofoam, clay, wire, weeds, seedpods and other magpie materials, serves as the show’s talisman. It is surrounded by “friends” like Fox’s painting of two dogs morphing into each another through their almost violent red outlines; Ruby’s monumental plush lattice, draping down from the ceiling; Mehretu and Hesidence’s large-scale, boldly gestural paintings; Altmejd’s plexiglass houses occupied by lacquered fruit and spools of thread; and Schutz’s almost grotesque painting of a headless figure with spread legs (the uplifting colors and background allowing you to ignore the fact that the figure is dismembered). Lucas’s cheeky floor-to-ceiling wallpaper greets viewers in the upstairs foyer/gallery, while de Balincourt’s small-scale painting of a group of, let’s say, friends well represents the spirit of the show.



A portrait of Yoko Ono by the designers ThreeAsFour, a piece displayed as part of the "Portrait of a Generation" exhibit at The Hole.

Meanwhile, the community spirit is also strong at the Hole Gallery, where 100 artists and arty types, all friends and extended family of the gallery, have made painted, drawn or photographic portraits of one another for the exhibition “Portrait of a Generation.” “I wanted this project to help connect new people or reinforce the bonds between existing friends, and then in the hanging of it give image to a community of people for the general public to engage with,” explains Kathy Grayson, who played matchmaker. Pairs include photographer Alex Prager and her sister Vanessa Prager; Slater Bradley with his muse Ben Brock; Barry McGee with his longtime friend and “Beautiful Losers” compatriot Clare Rojas; the artists (and partners) Allison Schulnik and Eric Yahnker; Yoko Ono and the designers ThreeAsFour; and Cynthia Rowley with her husband, the gallery owner Bill Powers.

“Pothole” is at Salon 94 Bowery, 243 Bowery, through July 6. Go to salon94.com.

“Portrait of a Generation” is at The Hole, 312 Bowery, through Aug. 10. Go to theholenyc.com.

Correction: June 18, 2012

The name of the show at Salon 94 Bowery is “Pothole,” not “Square Cave,” as previously stated in the first caption.