

ARTNEWS

OFF AND RUNNING: JAMES SHALOM ON HIS OFFSITE PROJECT
 BY Andrew Russeth POSTED 01/12/15 10:40 AM



Installation view of 'Seven Artists in Two Rooms,' with work by Greg Parma Smith, left, and Ned Vena.
 COURTESY ELLIOT KAUFMAN/OFFSITE

Tucked away on the fifth floor of 195 Chrystie Street, a hulking studio building on New York's Lower East Side, is "Seven Artists in Two Rooms," the latest exhibition from Offsite, an itinerant curatorial project run by James Shalom. It's a handsome one, and its seven artists are pleasantly, unusually eclectic, ranging from stalwarts David Wojnarowicz, Jessica Diamond, and Donald Moffett to young guns Ned Vena, Enzo Shalom, Greg Parma Smith, and Kyle Thurman. Because of the nature of the show, it's having a brief run, open only from January 7 through January 29. Shalom told ARTnews about the project.

Andrew Russeth: This is your second show with Offsite, which is also a website with some intriguing contributions from artists. What exactly is Offsite, and how did it come about?

James Shalom: Offsite is a project I started this past summer. It's sort of a guerrilla gallery at the moment. The shows are organized in spaces between leases. I was interested to see what could happen with a multigenerational group of artists. So far, both shows have brought together a pretty wide range of artists—both established and emerging, as well as some artists who operate outside of the art world.

The content you refer to on the website is an ongoing project called Index, where I invite artists to contribute something. It could be anything from a sketchbook, a diary entry, a video, personal memorabilia, short essays, source material—really anything. All of the artists have complete control over the posts. Basically, I was curious to see what these artists would send back to me.

That focus on a multigenerational approach is great to see. Why did you decide to do that?

I'm attracted to these strange overlaps, and I try to avoid an exclusionary mindset. You put together a group of artists who may not typically be associated with one another and a narrative is unavoidable.

In the show up now, there's an amazing wall painting by Jessica Diamond in one room that says, "SENSATIONALISM OR BUST." It was first made in 1985—across the room literally facing it are the gentrification anxieties in Greg Parma Smith's *Good Graffiti (Roberta's)* (2013), and smacked in between is a door by Enzo Shalom.

The show's title—"Seven Artists in Two Rooms"—has a nice vintage 1970s conceptual-art vibe to it. How did the work come together?

Yeah, it reminds me of the deadpan titles of Ed Ruscha's books from the '60s and '70s. I was also looking up MoMA's exhibition history and noticed titles from the early shows like "15 Americans" and just loved the way they sounded.

In terms of how the show came together—one thing led to another and at a certain point everything about it seemed weirdly synchronized. Some of the artists weren't initially familiar with each other but everyone was on the same page, so to speak.

Very cool. Your first two shows have been at 195 Chrystie, which is kind of a legendary place, having been a practice space for the No-Neck Blues Band and home to all sorts of galleries. How did you end up there?

It was kind of a coincidence coming back for the second show, just down the hall. There's a rich history and a good energy in the building. Marlene McCarty told me she remembered coming here to visit the Talking Heads' rehearsal space upstairs. There's a radiator in the space that makes these loud grunts—one of the artists said, "That's the sound of old New York."

Whoa, didn't know the Talking Heads had been there. So what do you have coming up? Any Offsite or other projects in the works?

At the moment I'm doing a lot of studio visits. There are several Offsite projects bubbling and Index will be updated regularly. I think the next show is going to be in a hotel room somewhere.

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