

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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WEEKEND UPDATE

by Walter Robinson

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[Andy Warhol's Red \(1978\), in "Retrospective" at Gagosian Gallery in Chelsea](#)

The hot show in New York last month was "Who's Afraid of Jasper Johns," the exhibition at **Tony Shafrazi Gallery** that features works by **Francis Bacon, Mike Bidlo, John Chamberlain, Malcolm Morley, Robert Morris, Francis Picabia, Rob Pruitt, Cindy Sherman** and others installed right on top of tromp l'oeil photographic wallpaper of the gallery's previous show, titled "Four Friends" and featuring works by Shafrazi's core early stable: **Donald Baechler, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring** and **Kenny Scharf**.

This wacky idea -- installing art on top of other art -- essentially produces a lot of visual noise. But as an avant-garde gesture it's priceless, playing upon and amplifying Shafrazi's notorious 1974 art action, when he spray painted "Kill Lies All" onto **Pablo Picasso's Guernica** (1937), then hanging a the Museum of Modern Art awaiting the end of fascist rule in Spain. You thought it was some kind of overheated psychosis, like the guy who hit **Michelangelo's Pieta** with a hammer ("*Pieta?* I thought it said 'pinata'," said a cartoon in the *National Lampoon*)? No, it was an extreme avant-garde performance, now illuminated by two of our best avant-gardists, artist **Urs Fischer** and dealer **Gavin Brown**, co-curators of the show.

As a portrait of Shafrazi, "Who's Afraid" telescopes time, creating a whimsical inventory of one individual's history and concentrating it in a single installation. It's a "box in a valise," to borrow the term for **Marcel Duchamp's** celebrated briefcase full of miniature replicas of his own famous artworks.

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[Installation view of "Retrospective" at Gagosian Gallery, with works \(from left\) by Piero Golia, Takashi Murakami and Tom Friedman](#)

Duchamp's *Boîte-en-valise* (1935-41) is a central exhibit in this month's hot show, "Retrospective" at **Gagosian Gallery** on West 21st Street in Chelsea. Organized by **Andisheh Avini**, an artist (he shows at **I-20**), curator and longtime Gagosian employee, the exhibition spreads works by 13 artists through the warehouse-sized gallery space. **Jasper Johns** is there, with a suite of *The Seasons* (1987), as is **Roy Lichtenstein** and **Andy Warhol**, both with works that assemble all their motifs into a single image.

A darkened room holds **Douglas Gordon**'s collection of several dozen videos, each on its own monitor ("we took all the tvs from Larry's apartment while he was out of town," joked one Gagosianian), and **Chris Burden**'s book of 50 Body Art photos from 1974 stretches along one long wall. In a corner is a long spill of colorful detritus that purports to be leftover bits of every eccentric sculpture made by **Tom Friedman**. And Italian artist **Piero Golia**'s model on sawhorses of a classical museum filled with a retrospective of his own work is billed as an example of "wishful thinking." One mini-exhibit shows a photograph of a young woman's back bearing a large tattoo of Golia's own portrait -- a bit of "work for hire," apparently.

Both "Who's Afraid" and "Retrospective" push us further along what seems like a strange and contradictory postmodernist trajectory, presenting nihilistic gestures of avant-garde provocation within a context of artistic egotism and institutional affirmation.



[Piero Golia's miniature of a tattoo work, in "Retrospective" at Gagosian Gallery](#)

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