

Fair Play

Ambitious installations and performances were few and far between in the fourth annual Gramercy International Contemporary Art Fair, crammed with little artworks crying "buy me" from beds, dressers, and toilets in 64 hotel rooms. Containing unsalable surprises, a few rooms redeemed the event.

Room 414 (Il Ponte Contemporanea, Rome): Matthew Marelo's dizzying video installation, which continued into the bathroom, was total and perfect. A vertiginous chaos of hotel furniture, accoutrements, and luggage, complete with gilded mirror on the floor, it was studded with video images of a man tumbling endlessly into a spiraling void.

Room 409 (Wessel + O'Connor): Transformed into an academic artist's studio, this room's installation included an artist at an easel (Mark Beard, in the role of his fictional great-uncle Bruce Sargeant, "painter of portraits, athletes, and still lifes"), sketching a nude male model—a magnificent specimen posing like a statue in the center of the space and enlivening the retrograde homoerotic paintings on the walls.

Room 405 (Spencer Brownstone): With a nod to Hitchcock's *Psycho*, third-generation endurance artist Skip Arnold took a four-day-long shower, lathering 10 hours each day in the steamy bathroom. "Raw, nude, and radical," claimed his gallery. Supremely silly, too, but it was pretty extreme, even if the naked artist couldn't compete with the artist's model down the hall. [There was even more competition at Sunday night's satellite event at Hotel 17, the Utopian Art Festival 3, where Marcello Krasilic's room featured a nude man performing rigorous yoga and Chivas Clem's installation stranded voyeurs at the doorway of a room whose mirror reflected a man jerking off on the dimly lit bed—V.A.]

Room 616 (Postmasters): Claude Wampler's *Muffle*, with sound, lighting, video, atmosphere, and action, takes the prize for postcoital repartee. This radical performance artist spent four days in flagrante delicto in a rumpled bed with a motorcycle, caressing and lip-synching a conversation with the supine machine, which responded to her seductions in a mechanical baritone.

Room 406 (Spot): This room was the refueling site for the most altruistic performance, Karen Kimmel's *Quench*. Her six performers wandered the corridors in pink jumpsuits with blue tanks on their backs, dispensing cups of lemony water to parched viewers, and returning to refill from water coolers in the bathtub. —KIM LEVIN