

“The Name of This Show Is Not: Gay Art Now”

★★★★★

Paul Kasmin Gallery, through Aug 14
(see Chelsea)

One thing is clear about this ambiguously titled group show: Artist Jack Pierson wields considerable clout as a curator. He’s gathered works by icons Warhol and Rauschenberg; more recently emerged talents like Matthew Barney and Elizabeth Peyton; and gallery newbies and novelties, such as avant-garde singer Antony (who displays handwritten lyrics). While there’s a smattering of activist art, the show is mostly apolitical. Many, but not all, of the 62 artists are gay, and the message seems to be that you don’t need to be homosexual to have a queer perspective.

There’s not much sex, so the work that explores eroticism stands out. Painters McDermott and McGough uncover suburban secrets by juxtaposing the exterior of a bourgeois manor with a portrait of an aroused man. Ryan McGinley’s photo of a nude couple—she’s on her back, he’s in the fetal position—evokes the famed portrait of John Lennon and Yoko Ono. In illustrator Michael Bilsborough’s intriguingly perverse scenarios, young thrill-



seekers cavort with drugs and S&M.

The gayest part of the show, in every sense of the word, is the gallery’s annex space, where painter Stephen Tashjian a.k.a. drag artiste Tabboo!, has re-created his riotously colorful East Village apartment by adorning the walls with celebratory caricatures of divas, flowers and other objects of desire, as well as his own pop-culture memorabilia. The installation is both fresh and nostalgic, a lost vestige of a madcap bohemia that’s given way to yuppies and no-nonsense white walls.

—Les Simpson