

Andrea Fraser answers questions about Orchard for *Neue Review*

1. Can you tell me what the main programmatic aspects of Orchard Gallery are?

Orchard is a three-year project founded as a limited liability corporation in April, 2005 by Rhea Anastas, Moyra Davey, Andrea Fraser, Nicolás Guagnini, Gareth James, Christian Philipp Müller, Jeff Preiss, R. H. Quaytman, Karin Schneider, Jason Simon, Bennett Simpson, and John Yancy, Jr.. Orchard does not have a “program” as defined by a specific, articulated concept or set of criteria that determines what we do and show. Orchard is “programmatic” in the sense that all of our activities intend to make an argument and articulate, enact or support a position. What that position is, however, is not singular or fixed but the subject of on-going debate and dialog among the partners of the LLC. This is not the case because of any political or philosophical adherence to a principle of dialogism or heterotopia, etc., but because the cohort is composed of individuals with different backgrounds, interests, projects, programs, politics and philosophies. Those differences, however, as well as some commonality amongst us, do serve as a basis for what has emerged as our “program.” While that program is largely driven by the initiative of individual partners, our group-process seeks to involve as many members as possible in each initiative. This process has produced a program that is rooted in our diverse engagements with the legacies of minimalism, conceptualism, neo-concretism, performance and experimental film; our diverse backgrounds in the United States, Europe, and Latin America; trans-generational networks in which we are involved; and a sense of alienation from the dominance of the market in the contemporary art world and conservative politics in American society. Other principles of general consensus include a commitment to historically-based artistic criteria (as opposed to market criteria) in our programming and a preference for conceptually, politically or thematically driven group exhibitions or projects (as opposed to solo exhibitions). Finally, Orchard has undertaken a number of reconstructions and re-presentations of ephemeral or unrealized historical works.

2. How is Orchard different from other alternative-spaces? How is it different from other commercial galleries?

Orchard was established as a for-profit limited liability corporation. Most alternative spaces in the United States are not-for-profit corporations, a legal status that allows them to raise and receive tax-deductible donations. The reasons Orchard opted for a for-profit rather than not-for-profit status are various. These include a desire to mount a critique of the commercial art market from within its structures; to critically engage the economic relations and conditions of value in the art market and attempt to construct functional alternatives; to avoid the marginality within a market-dominated art world that not-for-profit status often implies; and to develop a structure of financial support for positions, works and practices that are not being supported by the art market. This last rationale is one that Orchard may share with some other for-profit galleries that are sometimes called “alternative-spaces,” particularly galleries run by and for young artists. Orchard differs from many of these other for-profit “alternative” galleries in that its partners do not only include artists, but also curators, critics, filmmakers, and an art historian. Perhaps more importantly, Orchard partners do not fall into “young” or “early-career” categories, but can mostly be considered mid-career. Some of the participating artists work with other galleries in New York. So while Orchard is oriented toward developing a platform and means of financial support for positions, works and practices not supported in the art market, Orchard does not aim to serve as a launch-pad into the mainstream market. Orchard does not seek to engage in “career development” with solo shows and does not “represent” artists--partners or not.

In this regard, Orchard also differs from most commercial art galleries. The primary difference between Orchard and most other commercial art galleries today may be Orchard’s commitment to historically-based artistic criteria and rejection of market-based criteria in its programming. Orchard also differs from other commercial galleries in its financial structure. Each of Orchard’s partners are also investors in the LLC, investments which mostly take the form of monthly contributions. Commissions on sales are divided so as to repay major investments while also providing percentages for all partners involved in a sale in any way, as well as a percentage for Orchard’s publication project, Preemptive Press.

3. *Compromise appears on various occasions (e.g. in the decision-making of the design of the gallery, as well as in the gallery's structure itself: being commercial and also using alternative models, for instance, each member pays a monthly fee as well as paying the artist more percentage than the general rate is and giving him/her more co-determination in the presentation of his/her work), can you tell me a bit about the role (and affects) of compromise in the project?*

While compromise may be a necessary element of any non-authoritarian group structure, compromise has never been articulated as a principle of Orchard. On the contrary, Orchard's group process aims to allow each initiative or position to be realized with as much autonomy and as little compromise as possible. With regard to the design of the gallery, the financial constraints we faced during renovation were not viewed as resulting in compromise but rather as generating great ideas that were generally embraced with enthusiastic unanimity. Our thinking about commercial versus "alternative" status and our commission structure is discussed above.

4. *What have you shown so far and what are your future plans?*

Past exhibitions, projects and events at Orchard include:

Our inaugural exhibition, Part One and Part Two, organized by Rhea Anastas, Andrea Fraser, and Rebecca Quaytman. Part One (May 11 – May 29, 2005) consisted of my performance *May I Help You?*, 1991/2005, in the context of an exhibition-in-process including works by Luis Camnitzer, Moyra Davey, Gareth James, Nicolás Guagnini, Louise Lawler, Allan McCollum, John Miller, Christian Philipp Müller, Jeff Preiss, R. H. Quaytman, Martha Rosler, Daniela Rossell, Jason Simon, and Lawrence Weiner. For Part Two (June 3 – June 26, 2005), some of the works presented in Part One were removed, and historical and new works by Dan Graham, Nicolás Guagnini, Jeff Preiss, R. H. Quaytman, and Karin Schneider were included.

"Last Minute" (June 29 – July 16, 2005) organized by Jason Simon, a collection of one-minute videos selected from the first and second annual One-Minute Film Festival, founded by Simon.

"September 11. 1973." (September 11 – October 23, 2005),

organized by Nicolás Guagnini. “September 11. 1973” brought together works produced in reaction to the CIA-backed coup and assassination of the Chilean president Salvador Allende in 1973 with works exploring the events and consequences of 9-11-2001. Common threads included use of collaged media, attention to low-cost distribution such as printed matter or multiples, and a sense of urgency and outrage. Artists included Hans Haacke, Öyvind Fahlström, Karin Schneider, Diego Fernandez, Martha Rosler, Ivan Navarro, Luis Camnitzer, and Juan Downey.

From October 30 to November 27, 2005, Orchard presented a pair of works for exhibition and screening by Michael Asher and his former student Stephan Pascher. On October 30, a new print of Asher's 1973 16mm film, produced with his supervision, was screened once. From October 30 to November 27, Pascher presented *Lucky Chairs, 255 arrangements of 1-5 chairs taken 1-5 at a time, 2002-2005*. These presentations, and the refabrication of Asher's film, were organized by Rhea Anastas, Karin Schneider, and Jeff Preiss.

“Painters Without Paintings & Paintings Without Painters, (December 10 – January 15, 2006), organized by Gareth James, brought together works by BANK, Simon Bedwell, J. St. Bernard, Daniel Buren, Merlin Carpenter, Nicolás Guagnini, Jutta Koether, Michael Krebber, Lucy McKenzie, R.H. Quaytman, Blake Rayne, John Russell, Reena Spaulings, and Cheyney Thompson.

In addition to these programs, Orchard hosted two events for other organizations. These included a fifth anniversary party for the MIT Press journal *Grey Room*, held September 16, 2005, and “Small Works for Big Change,” an art auction benefiting the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, held December 3, 4, 2005. The Sylvia Rivera Law Project provides free legal services to low-income transgender communities and transgender communities of color. They also educate the public about trans oppression and support community organizing work that fights for the rights of their community.

5. Where do you position Orchard Gallery and how is the Gallery being received?

Orchard is located on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, an area with a long and complex history of settlement by successive groups of immigrants and, more recently, by different cultural and political communities, including urban activists and alternative galleries such as ABC No Rio and Colin de Land's first gallery space in the 70s and 80s. In the past ten years, the Lower East Side has become home to an ever growing number of young designer boutiques, sake and wine bars, a W Hotel tower and Moby's tea café, among other outposts of urban hipsterism. At the same time, it has witnessed a return of some of the contemporary art activity not seen in the area since the 1980s, with a range of for- and not-for-profit spaces from Participant Inc., to Orchard, Reena Spaulings, E-Flux, and Marccarone Gallery. Like most migrations of contemporary art organizations in New York City, the artistic "resettlement" of the Lower East Side has been driven above all by the availability of comparatively cheap commercial space. In all likelihood, this new generation of art spaces will fall victim to the same dialectic of real estate "development" that transformed Soho, the East Village and Williamsburg, where the art organizations are eventually priced out by the gentrification that they themselves helped bring about. In the meantime, however, the area, and Orchard within it, seem to be embraced with growing eagerness by people, like ourselves, who just can't stand to go to Chelsea anymore.