

# Flotsam

## NEW YORK DIARY

Anthony Haden-Guest



## A meaty proposition



Whitney hit: Vitale's *Patron*, 2009

Marianne Vitale, the artist, whose art-world-mocking video was a stand out at the Whitney Biennial, has been making strong sculptures out of reclaimed lumber from century-old factory floors and ceilings and modelled after outhouses and false fronts from American pioneer days. She is having a show later this year at her London gallery, *Ibid Projects*, but has no New York gallery and had been eyeing up Jeffrey's Meat Market in the Essex Street market.

"It's such a beautiful space. The city owns the building. My butcher thought he could pull some strings. So I got very excited for a second," she said.

Jeffrey Ruhalter, the butcher, did what he could but, as yet, to no avail.

"The city is asking too much money," Vitale said.

Memo to mayor: you made Christo's *Gates* happen. This is the kind of project that makes New York the art capital it is.

## Black tie brigade

The invitation came from Stefan Kalmar and Alex Zachary and it was to a party at Zachary's townhouse gallery. It promised live music,

cocktails and oysters and asked me to *s'il vous plait*", which was shortened to black tie. Well, that French touch did accordingly and set off on a round which included a bash where the only man dressed was on the working side of the table. So it was with some relief that Zachary's gallery on 16 East 77th St.

Yes, there were cocktails, live music, oysters in super-abundance and Todd taking pictures, but I noted he wasn't black tie. Not one anybody. It was

## Painting by numbers

"It's Not About You", Trey Speegle's first solo exhibition at Benrimon Contemporary on West 24th, which opens on 3 February, consists of ten large canvases based on vintage paint-by-numbers kits. The artist spent years building up one of the world's largest collections of this unique genre of kitsch Americana, during which time he was also a creative director at Condé Nast.

Speegle seemed a contented magazine-business lifer but, of course, the magazine business was entering into a time of turbulence. "So I just kept moving around," he says. "I went to *Allure*. I had worked on and off at *Allure* from the beginning. And I had met Bonnie Fuller. And then I went to *US Weekly*. I went back to *Vanity Fair* to do the first Hollywood issue; I art directed that. They brought me in a couple of months before and I worked with Annie Leibovitz on the photographs. And I worked with Annie on an Olympic issue. That was kind of fun, coming back. And I think Graydon [Carter] has really perfected what Tina [Brown] started."



Meat master: Ruhalter



Full-time job: Speegle in his studio

## How did he make the break?

"Well, I sort of gradually escaped. At one point my goal became never to work in Times Square. Since then, I never have."

How did he find entering a world with such different parameters?

"Well, when I first came to New York all my friends were artists. I worked for Pat Hearn, designing catalogues. And Pat did shows for Leo Castelli, so I did stuff with Leo. I did Peter Schuyff there. The first gallery I worked for was Holly Solomon. When I had my day job at *Vanity Fair*, McDermott and McGough, who had no money, would use my apartment as their studio. And I was always in nightclubs. That was how I met Keith Haring, Kenny Scharf and Rodney Greenblatt—all of the artists of the day. And I was doing a lot of word art. Pieces on banners."

## When did he start making art full-time?

"Five years ago I left *US Weekly*. I did go back to *OK! Magazine*, but only for three months. Two years ago I painted a backdrop for a Stella McCartney runway show in Paris. Now I just make art really."

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## Round the clock care

Paula Cooper is a dealer who is unafraid of transforming her gallery. She had holes hammered into her floor and bashed through a wall respectively for a couple of Robert Gober shows in her previous space in SoHo. For *The Clock*, Christian Marclay's video collage of film fragments which proceeds through 24 hours of real time, she has completely transformed the schedule of her space on West 21st Street.

The show, which opened on 21 January, will have unbroken twenty-four-hour screenings. And there will, of course, be staffers there, as well as security.

Will they work shifts? "Yes," said Katherine